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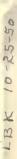
EDGAR BEECHER BRONSON

Author of
"Reminiscences of a Ranchman"
"In Closed Territory"
"The Red Blooded"
"The Vanguard," etc.



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FOREWORD

HIS volume, entitled "The Love of Loot and Women," is now first printed almost a year after the death of its lamented author, because it was desired to speedily complete the series of his published works. The labor spent upon preparing the manuscript was in the nature of an experiment with Mr. Bronson, to see if he could write fiction as well as he could write some other kinds of literature. He believed it to be a great story. He was justified in this; for, if every author did not believe the work in band his greatest, he could not muster up sufficient courage to finish it. It is a love story, set in the Philippines about the time of the advent of the Americans. There is abundant good picturization in it, particularly about Tony Trigg, the fight-loving head of the Constabulary, and more especially about Esa, the bird-child. Joseph Morine, the Australian agent, who manages things thereabouts, is drawn from the life of a friend whom he picked up in Bolivia, managing a plantation and mines for American owners. Morine is, or was, all that he is depicted, a world-wide adventurer, not a swashbuckler, but rather of a useful and commercial type. He furnished Mr. Bronson with the glowing pictures presented in this story, having had years of experience in the Philippines and baving rendered invaluable assistance to the Americans when they took possession. Another good character, also new to fiction, is Go-Peng, a philosophic and worldly-wise old Chinaman. Read Go-Peng's philosophy and see how deep down into our civilization be digs, carefully observing the while how he repeatedly hits off present-day situations in the countries afflicted by war.

Along in 1907, the magazine editors, or their scouts, were occasionally startled by something from the pen of Edgar Beecher Bronson. A trenchant, truthful and convincing pen he wielded. Truth, with Mr. Bronson, was evidently stranger than fiction; it was stronger, too. Generally, he wrote about the great West, but always he knew just about what he was going to depict.

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But who was he, and where did he hail from? And then when "Reminiscences of a Ranchman" (Experiences of his early life) came from the publishers it stood revealed that the author was a former New Yorker, who had spent nigh onto thirty years of his life in owning cattle ranches, and he knew everything about the great West that was worth knowing. The book was justly acclaimed

as the best one of its kind ever written.

Along in 1908, President Roosevelt announced that, as he was going to vacate the White House the next spring, he was planning to go on a hunting expedition to British East Africa. He did not know it then, but he had been anticipated in this by Mr. Bronson, who was ready to leave Mombasa after leisurely gathering a large collection of trophies, and writing the book entitled "In Closed Territory," just as Mr. Roosevelt and his party of hunters were sailing down the coast to make the same landing. "In Closed Territory" was so called because Mr. Bronson obtained the last permit to hunt in territory which was to be closed to all white men for their safety.

Mr. Bronson's kill was said to be the largest and most complete ever taken out of the country. He secured the third largest elephant on record, two of the largest water buffalos and one of

the largest rhinos.

Mr. Bronson was invited to British East Africa by William Northrup McMillan, the owner of Juja, a farm of some thirty miles outside of Nairobi, which is over three hundred miles inland from Mombasa, and in the heart of a good lion country. Yet Mr. Bronson had the misfortune never to see a lion, although his companions were such skilled hunters as George H. Outram and Will Judd, one of whom afterward conducted Mr. Roosevelt and party through a portion of their journey.

"In Closed Territory" is easily Mr. Bronson at his best as a writer, but the series of tales included in "The Red Blooded" may possibly be the more interesting, and "The Vanguard" rivals his first book in holding the reader spell-bound. It is compiled from dramatic incidents in the life of Clark B. Stocking, the Deadwood Coach guard, and Mr. Bronson was able through his inimitable art and his knowledge and remarkable memory

to put them into the thoroughly good shape in which they appear. Like everything he touched, Mr. Bronson never sacrificed the

truth as to facts.

He made two South American trips. The first trip, in 1910, included explorations of Colombia, Ecuador, and portions of Peru, and the second was stretched to include Trans-Andean country, a trip down to and across Lake Titicaca, and a visit to La Paz, the capital of Bolivia. The second trip was made chiefly by boat along rivers connecting with the Amazon, thus accomplishing a great trans-continental journey. In a way, be again anticipated Colonel Roosevelt, and although he made no claim to baving discovered The River of Doubt, he was able to tell just what it was, and where situated, without any attempt to deprive the Colonel of his discovery, such as was done by certain British explorers. Although Mr. Bronson had numerous adventures and many interesting experiences on this trip, which occupied bim for almost a year, in 1911 and 1912 be never wrote a chronicle of the journey. He sent home to his friend, Dr. William T. Hornaday, Director of New York Zoological Park, the rarest thing be could find, Federico, a spectacled bear. It was the first and only bear of its kind known to have visited America, and is rapidly becoming an extreme rarity in its native country. Unfortunately, it died in 1915.

Edgar Beecher Bronson was born in Bradford County, Pennsylvania, September 20, 1856, and on his mother's side was second cousin to the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, whom he grew to resemble in later life. His schooling was much the same as other boys of the time, and did not include a college. In fact, he left Owego, where his family was then living, and came to New York seeking employment when not yet eighteen years of age. He found a place as a reporter on the New York Tribune.

Two great adventures were indelibly stamped upon the young reporter's mind; the one remained a pleasant memory always, but the other was a dreadful nightmare that drove him out of his pet employment and sent him to the Wild West to recuperate. He drew by lot a coveted assignment to make a balloon journey with Washington Donaldson, a famous aeronaut. The trip was

a very pretty one, being about the Hudson River, between New York and Poughkeepsie, and so leisurely that it lasted twenty-six hours. This remained a record trip for some forty years. He continued to take an interest in aeronautics, and when the new era of flying-machines dawned, there was no one kept closer watch than he upon the accomplishments of Chanute, Langley, the Wright brothers, Curtiss and other American pioneers. He was equally well posted regarding foreign inventors and fliers. Thus he came to be one of the founders of the Aero Club, and by many regarded as its dean of aviators.

The second adventure was afloat on the ice in East River, in the winter or early spring of 1875, during a period of intense cold. After reporting a day's session of the Beecher-Tilton trial in Brooklyn, he had to get his copy to the Tribune office. This he could only do by crossing on the ice, which took him five hours. The hardship endured caused an illness that prevented his return

to bis duties as a reporter.

His friends on the Tribune advised a Western trip to restore his health, and put him in touch with monied people who were just then engaged in fostering huge cattle ranches in newly opened portions of the West. After six months as cowpuncher, under a rough and ranting foreman, the young man felt himself qualified to take the management of a small bunch of cattle, and with the financial backing of some of the people "back home," he started in for himself. He had many partners as a ranchowner, owning as he did at one time some 22,000 steers, but perhaps the late Abram S. Hewitt was most deeply interested of any, and for the longest time.

He began early making his mark upon the West. In the Autumn of 1877, his was the first herd driven from Laramie Plains to the north bank of the Platte River, and there wintered. All the country north of the Platte was then hostile, except for the then small camp of gold-seekers in the Black Hills, and the stage stations along the Cheyenne and Sydney stage roads. His was the first herd to settle in the Sioux country, so recently the scene of the Custer massacre. But it was cattle thieves and not Indians who first afflicted the new ranch. A herd was stolen,

and driven north, as the novice shrewdly discovered in spite of the efforts made to conceal their tracks. To catch them, Bronson took the Deadwood Coach, and arrived just after his bunch had been sold to a butcher. He compelled the butcher to a basty settlement and started back on the Coach. Two guards accompanied the driver of the stage, Boone May and Clark B. Stocking, both famous, and the latter of whom was made the hero of "The Vanguard." Sure enough, the Deadwood Coach was attacked by seven masked road-agents as it was nearing the stage-station on Old Woman's fork of the Cheyenne River, but they were beaten off, or killed by the guards, assisted by Bronson.

After some fifteen years of experience as a ranch owner in the Northwest, ranging as far as Wyoming, the scene of his operations shifted to the Southwest, and El Paso became his head-quarters where he engaged in banking. Incidentally, two of the records established by him about this time were saddle journeys from San Antonio to El Paso, 121 miles in 24 hours, and

through the Bolson de Mapini, 200 miles in 36 hours.

He had married at Cheyenne, in 1881, Grace Vernon Ross, the daughter of a Captain in the United States Army, and they bad three children, Edgar Beecher Bronson, Jr., Clarence King Bronson, and Grace, now Mrs. L. L. Tweedy, of London, England. Of his sons, the elder took to the law; the younger took to the Navy, and shortly after graduating from Annapolis, concluded to follow so far as he could in the footsteps of his father, and entered the Aviation Corps. Possibly he was influenced by the appointment of his father at about this time as one of the Aero Club experts to report upon the Burgess-Dunn aeroplane, a new stabilizer, from which great things were expected, and shortly to be tried out at Marblehead, Mass. Clarence E. King, for whom he was named, was a truly great American, whom his father came to know intimately through John Hay, in the old Tribune office. Mr. King was then in charge of the Government's Geological Surveys along the Fortieth Parallel, and, of course, knew everything and everybody in the great West. He was, until his untimely death, the closest and dearest friend Mr. Bronson bad. Lieut. Clarence King Bronson lost his life in

FOREWORD

November, 1916, while making experimental flights, dropping bombs at a target in the Potomac River. Mrs. E. B. Bronson, the mother, died in March, 1912, while her husband was in the heart of the South American wilderness.

Mr. Bronson was a member of the Manhattan, Lotos, National Arts and Aero Clubs and the Camp Fire Association of America. He was also one of the organizers of the American

Bison Society, of which he was Secretary.

During the past eight or nine years, Mr. Bronson was in great demand as an after-dinner speaker. The public seemed never to tire of his stories, especially the narration of his British East African adventures. He liked to tell them best as they came to him, in an easy conversational tone, without any pretense to finished oratory, although he possessed all the qualities of a good orator, including a good presence. When asked, he would confide to you that, in Africa, just as Roosevelt was called Bwana Tombo, literally translated, The Rotund Master, he was termed Bwana Kmerije, translated, the Master Who Smiles.

Stricken with apoplexy at Delmonico's, the night of February 3rd, 1917, just as he had begun an address to the Alumni Association of the German Hospital, whither he was removed—The Master Who Smiled passed away the next morning. He was engaged to be married within a week to Mrs. Harry Torrey Johnson, widow of the founder of the Manhattan Electrical Company. The funeral took place from the Church of the Transfiguration,—"The Little Church Around the Corner."

WILLIAM A. TAYLOR.

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CHAPTER I

ESA'S HOME IN THE JUNGLE

Notwithstanding her great black eyes were always aglitter with ominous lights fed by the fires of fierce passions that slumbered through her infancy and earlier youth, Esa was a bird-child—at least to the extent that she was hatched in a tree top, high aloft of the tangle of vines and bush that hid the steaming black soil that fed them.

There, in airy, softly whispering leafy recesses, her breed of

jungle folk made their nests.

There, high aloft, those ominously glittering eyes first opened, on a world so dim, shadowy, mysterious, so awesome in its vagueness, that it must surely harbor swarms of elfin and imp-

ish shapes just without one's short vision range.

There, among the tree tops, Esa's nest was by turns gently swayed by the cool breezes that swept down from the mist-hid crest of Mt. Apo and violently rocked by the earthquakes that from time to time shook the Island of Mindanao from center to circumference.

There, shut within the brooding gloom of tropical forest, shuddering at the raucous croaking of parrots, the shrilling voices of the smaller monkey folk and the hoarse, terrifying roar of the howlers, instinctively her earliest croonings sympathetically imitated the low, harmonious notes of the sweetest pipers among the tinier bright-feathered folk that were ever darting hither and you around her or nested or perched her nearest neighbors.

There and so Esa's voice became attuned to the low and infinitely melodious pitch that, throughout her life, at once constituted perhaps her most irresistible charm and always remained a weird foil to the savage impulses the fascinating

little barbarian never long managed to conceal.

There, her youthful imagination was colored by the sweet stories the whispering leaves were ever confiding to her.

There, her soul was further imbued with adoration of gentlest melody by the harmonies, soft as a lovelorn maiden's sighs, that Usup's deft fingers enticed from the fragile strings

of the kuteebapee.

There and so Esa's wild Pagan blood absorbed the humanizing leaven that served to make her the most contradictory combination of a gentle, tender simplicity that seemed to border on clinging timidity, and of a savage indifference to every form of self-control that made her dangerous as the fierce tigres.

Primitive as our common mother, Eve, Esa, now ten years old and nearing marriageable age, was risen above her in no particular save in her heritage of tribal traditions and superstitions with which the countless intervening centuries have

endowed all wild races the wide world round.

But of these traditions she knew more than any Monobo Pagan of them all save only one, her own father, Usup.

For Usup performed functions and wielded authority that placed him second only to Punungan, chief of the Pugsan clan of the Monobos.

As Lukus, or player of the kuteebapee and tribal bard, he was custodian and sole purveyor of the tribal tradition and history.

As Ingorandy, or priest, and sole communicant with the tribe's supreme god, Dewata, and all the long line of minor deities, benign and malignant, of his hierarchy, Usup alone was their law-giver, he alone availed to mitigate individual suffering and avert tribal calamity, he alone stood between the Monobos and their dread of the deistic wrath that the cupidity of many generations of cunning Ingorandys had employed to their profit.

Indeed, the authority of Usup was supreme over that of Chief Punungan in all save when the warriors of the tribe picked up their blow guns, spears and bows and arrows and stole away through the dusky forest to do battle with their enemies, although, by tribal custom, as their War Chief, Punungan

was their nominal head.

More, Usup was a sabio, a wise man, and a proper one, exper-

ESA'S HOME IN THE JUNGLE

ienced of the world and wise far beyond any man of his race. Many of his long roll of years had been passed in captivity, first as slave to the Moros and later as servant to *Paddies*,

the Spanish priests.

And it was precisely the knowledge so obtained that in no small measure gave him his power among his people, for it was not from timidity but out of wisdom that he restrained his clansmen from the raids of their civilized neighbors by which other over-confident Monobo clans were ever beating their wild heads against stone walls and inviting pursuits that always ended in heavy punishment.





CHAPTER II

RUTH'S HOME UNDER THE ELMS

A dour father was James Snell.

His pride of his mills and his boasts of his faith and rectitude were as great as should have been his shame of a set of cruelly hard and fast rules that, as applied to his mills, taxed muscles and starved stomachs to the limit of endurance, and, as applied to his family, cut heart strings and sobered faces into somber, impassive masks.

Rest! Play! He never did. Why should others?

Study and work, work and study, that had been his rule.

Without work, tireless, never ceasing work, would he have managed to line a whole mile of the Merrimac's shore with smoking chimneys and throbbing boilers?

Without study, constant, patient study, could it have happened that now great batteries of turbines, turned by the Merrimac's harnessed flood, had forever stilled the boilers and made annual savings in fuel bills that represented a good interest on a tolerable fortune?

Study? One must study and learn to better one's self.

Ah! had he been privileged to profit by a broad education in youth, instead of being forced to begin work at his father's forge while yet a lad, now there would be two miles of his mills instead of one.

Others! Ah! Each must do for himself.

Charity! Oh, charity is the crime of the age, as the greatest encourager of idleness, and all idleness is waste and waste is a sin.

For what were we given our talents, pray? Certainly not that they should be squandered.

The hundreds that wearily toiled in his mills and spent themselves for a pittance livelihood that his fortune might be daily swelled!

Why, did not he give them every comfort they knew—and Opportunity?

So, once, wearily toiled he.

Was it his fault if they spent their off hours in stupid diversions, instead of working and studying to better themselves, as had he?

Inexorable as the daily turning of the mills' turbines was the

family routine.

Occupation, serious occupation of some sort, filled all the waking hours.

Immutably as the mills' snapping belts and whirring wheels

must the family be profitably employed.

Indeed, the only relaxation that Ruth Snell and her mother were permitted, she from her childhood studies, her mother from household labors that included all but its ruder drudgeries, were the various services of their church—none of which, except its festivals, the devout father allowed himself or them to miss.

No leaven of levity lightened Ruth's childhood. The stern home régime prevented that free, untrammeled expression of feeling that alone constitutes an atmosphere in which the budding loves of infancy may bloom and mature.

What wonder, then, that a wretched starveling scarcely recognizable as a poor counterfeit of Love flickered feebly in Ruth's

heart?

It is through the period of tender impressionability of infancy and childhood that character and life habit are most highly

colored if not inalterably formed.

And hence it had been practically inevitable that Ruth, her heart chords atrophied past capacity to respond with normal warmth even to a cordially offered friendship, her mind advanced far beyond those of most girls of her years and severely trained to preoccupation with nothing but her studies, should finish, in turn, her boarding school and her college as destitute of any form of whole-hearted love or even warm friendship as when she first left her father's roof.

Returned to the grim treadmill of home life, she found her

RUTH'S HOME UNDER THE ELMS

mother still strong and active, still plodding, wearily, doubt-

less, but unflinching, at her tasks.

Her suitors, of course, were numberless, greedy more of the mile of mills of which she was sole heir than captive to her beauty.

And yet Ruth had beauty of a sort, most notable beauty.

But the beauty was all in her face.

Her figure was so hopelessly lacking in interesting incident that none but a wholly mad Cubist could take any pleasure contemplating it.

While almost as tall as a grenadier, Ruth was slender to

leanness and drearily flat.

Contracted to half her stature, there was not enough of her to make any of the nameless fascinating curves that are the pride of women and the delight of—the rest of humanity.

All of charm she owned was centered in her face.

In head and face Ruth was Feminine Intelligence incarnate.

Her forehead was majestic in height and breadth.

The great wide-set, violet eyes bespoke more of contemplation than of dreaming.

An otherwise oval facial angle was strengthened by a softened

replica of her father's pitilessly square jaws.

The lips, while exquisitely curved, were thinner than would long detain a sybarite.

And to all these charms, her habit of preoccupied introspection lent her a fascinating air of mystery.

None could pass her by.

And yet Ruth was a type to promise an intellectual feast, no more.

But of all her suitors, only one ranked high enough in fortune to have her father's approval—for all his wares must bring the highest price he dared hold out for, even when it came to the disposal of his daughter's hand.

However, it was little she was really bothered with suitors, sheltered as she was by the family habit of self-sufficiency, rarely giving or taking of entertainment, receiving seldom, encouraging no intimacies. And as for young Kent, the eli-

gible, he was not the sort to interest Ruth, a light-weight in all but his money, who had been dropped from Harvard his sophomore year, not for any spirited rioting, which, perhaps, even Ruth might have forgiven, but for his stupidity, for deficiencies in his studies.



CHAPTER III

THE PAGAN'S PARADISE

Nor was it in her father alone that Esa was fortunate.

Her mother, Lancona, was the Medicine Woman of the clan. As daughter of a long line of Medicine Women, Lancona was deeply learned in the curative value of all the herbs and the trees of the forest.

And while she would never have dared to claim it any more than any of the clan could be found to admit it, it was the ministrations of Lancona that relieved more pain, assuaged more suffering than did all Usup's earnest invocations of Dewata's mercy, notwithstanding Usup was always far the bet-

ter paid of the two for his services.

Magnificent was Lancona in her insignia of medical rank, from the Monobo point of view, her arms wellnigh covered from shoulder to wrist with brass bangles, great ivory studs in her ears, heavy brass anklets extending from her bare feet quite up to the knee, where they were met by a brown hempen skirt gaily interwoven with brilliant feathers, a brightly beaded chaplet encircling her brow.

And, naturally, it was from Esa alone, her favorite daughter,

that Lancona withheld no secrets.

Esa was her sole companion on her stealthy avoidance of prying clan eyes while questing in the forest for supplies of its curative treasures—or for any of the many malignant growths she knew certain to cause either sickness or death, at her pleasure, far more certainly efficient to so serve her than were any of the benign roots and plants sure of effecting cures.

Indeed, it was no less than deliberately courting the death that soon extinguished them for any to seriously cross the in-

terest or the will of Usup or Lancona.

Any who did soon dropped, snuffed out as suddenly as by a lightning stroke, of some mysterious agency none of the

awed tribe folk could explain, or faded, wasted and suffered for weeks before expiring—according to Lancona's judgment of their deserts.

His sons all killed in battle or captive among the Moros, and Esa his youngest child and hence his pet, it was she whom Usup elected to instruct; first, in all the mysteries of *Dewata* and his attendant deities and of the incantations most effective in service as their high priest; second, in the traditions and history of the tribe; third, perhaps, in more or less of the wisdom he had absorbed during his years in captivity among the Moros and Christians.

For among the Monobos sex was no more a bar to the wielding of the high authority of *Lukus* or *Ingorandy* than to war chieftianship itself—so a maid or woman owned the knowl-

edge, craft, and spirit to seize it.

Whence it would not be unreasonable to assume, perhaps,

that the Monobo women were the original suffragettes!

Sedulously avoiding warfare as Usup did, dwelling beside the head waters of the Malbul River, a tributary of the Rio Grande, on a low shoulder of Mt. Apo, whose smoking crater towered twelve thousand feet above them, the life of the clansmen of his village of Pugsan was the very simplest of the simple.

There they dwelt in happiness and plenty, so long as left to themselves, exempt from attacks that might drive them to flight and abandonment of their little fields of growing food-

stuffs.

There they were unshadowed by the political, industrial, religious, financial and social strifes of what we love to boast as civilization and the bitter jealousies and hatreds they engender.

There they were free of all those morally withering and blighting influences of the civilization that, the higher one mounts it, the more bitter his experience of the torments of

a living hell.

With fish abounding in the river and game swarming in the forest, fishing and the chase of wild boar and deer cost the men as little in time and labor as did the scratching of the

THE PAGAN'S PARADISE

rich black soil and the raising of the village needs of rice, corn, pepper, sweet potatoes, tobacco and bananas cost the women.

And far less still was the toll in labor Monobos paid for the rude architecture that sheltered them, for it was simple as the first product of the first primitive sayage hands that ever builded.

In times of peace and in regions of believed security, rare enough, unfortunately, in these days, the ordinary living huts, floored and framed of split bamboo and roofed and walled with palm leaves, were perched on poles ten feet above the ground.

Accessible were their huts only by leaning notched poles, up and down which men, women and children, chickens and dogs,

raced as readily as on a proper staircase.

And with these pole ladders lifted aloft of nights, and their floors heavily enforced of a double layer of bamboo as safeguard against the prodding spears of marauding neighbors, there on their perches the Monobos slept in security against night surprise.

But in these days few and very remote from the coast were

the places where the clansmen could live in safety.

Thus it happened that the Pugsan folk nested their palm leaf shelters high aloft in the branches of the taller trees, thirty or more feet from the ground, reachable only by swarming up the many rope-like vines pendant from the branches, or by scrambling along the snaky curves of the matapalos, the tree-killers or parasitic vines that tightly clasp the mother trunk in their death grip.

And central among their nests in the tree tops, among the branches of the largest trees were built their strongholds, heavier of floor, walled thick about with bamboo, and holding from one to two tons of stones, the primitive projectiles that in pre-powder days were hurled from the barbicans of

castle walls upon investing enemies.

And there in their leafy nests their young were born, the young they loved and never tired of tending as few but savage and bourgeois folk do the wide world over.

There they led a life of idyllic peace save when disturbed by roaring Moro war gongs and clashing krises, and of idyllic

decency as well, in some respects.

For Monobos were content with the one wife of their first choice, all except the Chiefs, who, like most high place-holders of civilization, were overprone to polygamous indulgence.

Indeed, the more to the credit of the Monobo rank and file

Indeed, the more to the credit of the Monobo rank and file was their monogamy, from the fact that five to fifteen dollars in any form of tribal wealth sufficed to buy a bride from even

the most grasping parents!

Likewise the less the wonder that the captains of local predatory industry, the Criminal Rich of the Mt. Apo jungles, fattened more or less to surfeit on the spoils of their enemies and the sweating of their tributary clansmen, drunk of their power and reckless in its exercise, as are most high-fortuned folk, whatever their race or environment, should contemn tribal conventions and fill whole tree tops nigh solid with connubial nests cradling a variegated assortment of yokemates!

Did they less, untrue would they be to the most sedulously practiced if not the most honored traditions of insolent In-

dustrial Captaincy.



CHAPTER IV

ESA LEARNS WITCHERY AND WITCHCRAFT

Unthreatened by Moros or by warring tribesmen, naught did the Monobo fear but the displeasure of his gods, of *Dewata* and his familiars, for was not every type of happening within their horizon that terrorized or might harm them a manifestation of deistic wrath?

And who but Usup could save, who but he could intercede for them?

Small the wonder, then, far advanced in years as he was and bereft of his sons, that many, very, very many were the nights he devoted to the training of Esa, alike in the witchery of the *kuteebapee* and the witchcraft on which he throve.

Many were the soft tropical nights heavy with the intoxicating scents of the forest, when the slow pulsing breezes caress the cheek like loving finger tips and all but insect voices and the shrill screams of the *tigres* are stilled, that Usup withdrew little Esa to a nest by themselves, hand-over-handing along swinging lianas until they were quite apart from all others.

And once so come to a favorite perch, presently the *kutee-hapee* would begin to softly trill, to trill so softly it could scarcely be heard ten yards away, a veritable whisper of harmony that often the droning insect voices drowned.

And then Usup would begin a story of some of the wonders he alone of all their clansmen knew.

Stories of wonders and of terrible deistic agencies that at first frightened the little maid, still slender almost as a reed, but daily growing deeper of chest and rounder of arm of her arboreal life and fuller limbed of darting about the jungles and climbing Mt. Apo's steep slopes.

So it was, still night by still night, she learned that the thunder is *Dewata's* voice; the lightning, the searching, burning glance

of His angry eye; the tornado, His wrathful breath; the abun-

dant rains and fat crops, His benignant indulgence.

So she learned that, from His throne high aloft among the clouds on Mt. Apo, *Dewata* gives or takes the sun, moon and stars from His people at His will, obscures or reveals them.

Thence, from His throne, by the infuriated stamping of His

mighty foot, He rends and rocks the earth.

Thence He sends out His myriad familiars into the most hidden recesses of the forests and the farthest parts of the earth to spy upon and influence alike the lives of men and beasts, each of whom in his turn must be appeared to win their favor with their supreme overlord.

Thence, to mothers heedless of Him, He sends deformed

and blind offspring.

And chief among the innumerable deities of His hierarchy is Toomulkun, an enormous red bird, never seen of any but the adept eyes of an Ingorandy.

One day, she, Esa, shall see him!

And she shudders.

And then, oh! the terror of Busau, the habitually malignant

god!

A most hideous monster is Busau, that flies through the air, rises wraith-like out of still pools, emerges from the solid trunks of sound trees, assumes the shape of a bird or beast or reptile at his evil will!

Busau?

Why, so terrible is he that only against the tribe's enemies

does the *Ingorandy* invoke him.

But sometimes, Esa must remember, he becomes intractable and throws down Monobo houses, usually when Dewata's angry foot is stamping and the earth is trembling.

And the Limbingen, how they are literally swarming with

evil genii while Munowog hovers in their vicinity!

How they are alive with bad *Limbings*, the little devils that do their haunting and work their malevolence in toad or reptilian forms!

The Limbingen, the haunts of the Limbings, are always great

ESA LEARNS WITCHERY AND WITCHCRAFT

balatas, a type of rubber tree. Disguising their sinister intent, upon the stately trunks of these balatas tiny tendrils of the *matapalo* stealthily steal and about them twine, as if in

loving embrace.

But there the *matapalos* cling and *climb* and GROW, thickening and extending themselves, ever pressing harder, gnawing deeper, until bark and cambium are withered and the very sap cells are compressed past capacity to fulfil their functions.

Destiny, only destiny itself pursues and finishes the execution of its decrees as implacably as the *matapalo*, indifferent to time, slowly, patiently, remorselessly and inevitably de-

stroys all tree life it once seizes upon.

Soon boring insects do the rest, gut all dead wood from within the tangle of massive buttressing vines—and lo! the haunts the Limbings love are ready for tenancy, great dusky cavities, broad and high as were the vanished trunks, each spacious for untold thousands of the little demons.

And there they stay holding such wicked carnival and thence from them issue such terrible spells that any Monobo would die before he would venture near a *Limbingen* in the night.

Invincible are the *Limbings* even against the shrewdest incantations of the most learned *Ingorandy*, so long as *Munowog* is near.

Munowog?

Oh, he is a huge bird, big as a house and black as a burnt stick.

Eggs?

Why Munowog lays black eggs big as a boar's body with the head off, and hatches them by burying them in the sand of river bars exposed to the sun.

Round about he awkwardly trots, like a lame man, and sel-

dom does he fly.

But once the *Ingorandy* sees *Munowog* awing, and knows the good fairies will immediately chase away the little demons and take their places in the *Limbingen*, he runs to bring the clansmen for the pleasure and profit of a sight of the fairies.

But run fast as the wind though he may, never have any arrived before a Limbingen in time to glimpse a fairy.

Still, what does it matter?

For, of course, the *Ingorandy* has seen them and is ever ready to tell of them and to convey the largess of merriment, good cheer, fat crops, and sound health the fairies bring for all—at

so much a tell and a convey.

And how acutely must the *Ingorandy* regret that none of his people arrive in time to hear the sweet music and happy songs and smell the masses of fragrant flowers with which the fairies brighten the sombre haunts of which they have dispossessed the bad *Limbings!*

That, especially, Esa will do well to remember.



CHAPTER V

POTENTIALITIES OF A HUMAN CIPHER

And yet, insignificant human cipher though he was, it was precisely young Kent who, in effect, determined Ruth Snell's career and drove her into the perils of exile remote from her home and friends.

Thus often do the cheapest pawns on the chessboard of life temporarily exercise terrible potentialities.

Over young Kent, Ruth Snell and her father clashed—for the first and last time.

Not in the white heat of anger that often fuses into remorse and regret did their wills clash, but in disagreement so bitterly cold that the slender bond that subsisted between them parted like the brittle straw it was.

Told she must receive young Kent, win his proposal and

marry him, Ruth reproachfully protested.

"But, father, what would you say if you had such a brainless idler of an incompetent for a son?"

Quick came the remorseless answer:

"Ha! as son, I'd disown him, or drive him in overalls among the mill hands, if anything could be found the idiot could do."

"And yet you would have me marry him, a creature you'd hold unfit to own as a son, father?"

"Why, yes, Ruth, I'm thinking he'll do you quite well enough as a husband. His father did a pretty good job of work, good enough to warrant overlooking his son's deficiencies, it strikes me, when we come to consider the millions he has stowed away. Then you must admit young Kent has no vices—is harmless as your grandma's old gander."

"But to this day, father, you know you will tolerate no idleness in mother or me," adding softly, scarcely audibly, after a deep sigh, "and sometimes it seems you even begrudge us

necessary rest."

"Certainly, Ruth, it's everyone's duty to keep busy. Do I

rest?

"And as for him," he added before Ruth could reply, after a mirthless chuckle which was the nearest approach to laughter he ever indulged, "as for him, Ruth, you may believe me I have some very definite plans for forcing him to my ways of thought and work—once you've hooked him and old Kent is buried.

"The old man is breaking fast. Soon he'll be down, but not before I'm named in the trusteeship of the estate with power to tie knots in that boy when I like—and his short-comings prompt me to tie 'em. Which will be about every day until I

get him lined out as I want him.

"It will be *Industry* spelled in big letters for him, and no sort

of nonsense in the use of his money."

"Ah! that's it!" Ruth coldly remarked, "I had begun to sus-

pect as much. Thank you for making it quite plain.

"You hold me as a chattel, no more or less, as the chattel daughters have been to savage fathers the world over since the Stone Age, to be bartered to the highest bidder precisely as they auction the slaves and beasts captured on their bloody raids of their neighbors!

"I'm just a human commodity that has come cheap, but to be sold as dear as parental cunning can contrive, as are the

naked, mindless maids of the deserts and the forests!

"Well, I admit I should be thankful you hold me as high as you do, but I confess to a lack of pride in the fact that my father can manage to get his own consent to lower himself to the level of those gibbering caricatures of Christian manhood who were diggers of wild roots and gnawers of the bones of their slain enemies."

"You'd make a bad mistake, young woman, to ever again talk to me like that," her father answered in the slow, measured, calculating tones habitual to him, "you put the situa-

tion, well, almost brutally, I should say.

"Barter you? Nothing of the sort. It's just business, prudence—the wisdom come of a lifetime of successful business

POTENTIALITIES OF A HUMAN CIPHER

dealing. I've not been losing much as I've gone along, have 1?"

"No, you certainly have not," Ruth replied, but adding under her breath, "unless it's your self-respect, if you ever had any." And then, presently, after a moment's reflection, she made a last effort to save the straw that bound them together, when she continued:

"But, father dear, don't you realize it's my life you are dealing with, not the product of your mills, my life and happi-

ness?

"Married, one has bestowed one's self, 'For better, for worse,' the service has it. Must not her marriage inevitably prove for worse for any woman, no matter what the station from which she has sprung, who mates with such a human zero as young Kent?

"Unless, to be sure, she be of that wickedest type of all women who find their only occupation and happiness in the wanton flaunting of their riches for the joy of the envy they

inspire.

"There are hearts that love abides in, we are told, although it's little of that I'm knowing; but surely in every marriage where love is absent the wife must be possessed with either pride or shame; with pride in the man possessed or with shame of her bondage to him.

"Do you realize that your insistence condemns me to such

shame, irretrievably; effaces hope of ever knowing pride?"
"Pride! Pride, girl?" the old mill man replied, "What can you buy with pride?

"No pride was ever converted into bankable funds or other

tangible assets.

"Pride, girl? Why, Pride is synonymous of Failure.

"Pride it is that holds men back from the little detours from the middle of the commercial road that make money—and he makes biggest money whose detours are widest, so he's not stupid enough to get entangled with the law.

"Pride has no place in business."

"Forget it, girl—and I'll make you the richest woman in the State. I'll tie up the Kent fortune so tight none of the courts will manage to free it, and I'll train you how to make your wealth as irresistibly attractive of more wealth as is the flow of all the earth's floods to the sea."



CHAPTER VI

HER LIPS A SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

It was the mornings, her free mornings, that Esa dearly loved. Scarcely was the moon paled to silver, the droning insect chorus hushed, the fugitive lamps of the *luciernagas*, those giant fireflies of the tropics, faded, and dawn brightening her nook of the world, than the bird-child was transformed to a nymph no lover of beauty could deny his worship.

Up betimes, rival to the earliest risers of the feathered folk among whom she dwelt, up out of her nest she rose, carolling gaily as the sweetest singers of them all, and down a bejuco

slid to the ground.

Then into the Malbul's cool waters she plunged, gliding hither and yon over its still pools light as a feather wafted by vagrant breezes, her slender brown body supple and sinuous as the python's, her slow sweeping arms gleaming bright as his own silver-bronze scales, her exquisitely arched but dangerously full lips a veritable Scylla and Charybdis no man careless of his helm could safely cruise near.

And finished her dip in the waters and standing preening herself on Malbul's white sands, actually ablaze of the ardent glances the eager sun had sprung aloft of the tree tops to fix

upon her, our bronze nymph was transmuted to gold.

Withdrawing within the shadow of the thick ranks of caña brava that sentineled her favorite pool, tall ranks whose waving tops made them look like the bravely plumed crests of a squadron of gallant hussars, attendant upon their youthful queen, awaiting her behests, there secluded from the embarrassment of the all too burning glances of the sun, slowly the dull red roses faded from her cheeks until they were dim and shadowy as the ardors of banked coals, gradually the fast heaving breasts lessened their pulsing.

Presently the caña brava was gently parted and out thrust a lad's face, and a low voice called, "It's me, Esa; I'm here."

Whirling in astonishment, and with just the color of a frown of resentment at the intrusion, she answered, "Ah! Tugan. But who gave you permission to come?"

"My-well, my wish to see you. May I approach?"

"No, you cannot. You know I send for those I want," came the imperious answer, bred partly of a sense of rapidly mounting superiority over her clansmen and partly of the wilful ways even forest maids early learn their charms permit them to indulge.

And then, before the smile was wholly gone from Tugan's face, the bird-child's curiosity stirred and she asked, "But

what is that you have in your hand?"

"Something I brought for you," Tugan pouted; "a guacamayo I just shot; the biggest, finest feathered bird you ever saw—feathers to make you the richest tunic in Pugsan," and he held aloft a great parrot wearing such a wealth of brillianthued feathers as no maid could fail to covet. "And—and here's your dinner," he added, holding out a fat pava, lighter of weight and black of wing and breast, but sweet and tender of meat as the most royally bred of all the turkey tribe.

"Ah, good Tugan, you may approach," she sweetly smiled—proving Eve's daughters the wide world round differ little, whatever their estate. Indeed, if it is true, as a more or less wise cynic has held, that "If you would win women"—civilized women—"play diamonds," surely you may no more quick-

ly win a wild forest maid than with bright feathers.

Leaping at her will, out to her across the white sands bounded Tugan, a slender but powerful lad, perhaps only four years older, but towering head and shoulders above her, dangling the prizes that had won him favor in one hand and grasping the long slim tube of his blow gun in the other.

Son of Chief Punungan, and eldest son at that, Tugan was not only descended from a long line of the war chiefs of his clan, but as the eldest of his brothers, one day would be wearing his father's flaming war plumes and leading stealthy raids

of his clansmen against their enemies.

The boldest and handsomest of all the youths of Pugsan,

HER LIPS A SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

what wonder that already for two years Tugan had been thrall to Esa, seldom farther from her little heels than behind him trotted the well-trained hunting dog that unerringly trailed the wounded deer flying of a careless arrow-shot or nipped

and turned the charge of maddened wild boar!

Likewise, what wonder that his unflagging devotion should touch her heart strings and set them ringing tender cadences, or that in the past she had joyfully drunk his caressing words and encouraged his eager hope that one day they would be mated! Why not, indeed, when Tugan alone of all the clan might aspire to win the hand of the favorite daughter of its Lukus and Ingorandy?

But lately lowering clouds had been obscuring Tugan's best

loved visions.

The little maid was changing. Often she would not answer him.

Sometimes she stood as if trying to look deep into the crowding jungle, silent, seemingly even ignorant of his presence,

deaf to his voice.

Moreoftenstill, a new note of authority had come into her tones that was strange indeed for a Monobo maid, even though she be the daughter of the mightiest of his clan, and she ordered him and others about as only his father, Punungan, talked to his tribesmen when leading them to war.

What did it mean?

Surely she was not offended with him, for at other times she was kind to him as ever, and sometimes still permitted him

to follow her through the forest as of old.

Tugan was puzzled, for in nothing was he mentally superior to other Monobo boys of his age, save in the greater pains his father, the chief, had taken to train him in the deft use of his weapons and in forest craft.

And if herself to any extent sensible of such change, doubtless she could no more have clearly explained it than could he.

Wholly ignorant he of the mysteries and wonders with which Usup had been awakening and absorbing her young mind, and of the mental uplift, the pride and sub-conscious sense of

predominance over her fellows her rapidly growing knowledge was stirring in her, come of a dawning realization that one day shortly she would be playing upon their fears and encouraging their hopes as now did Usup, she herself could probably have told no more than that she had the right to unbridle her will.



CHAPTER VII

THE VALUE OF ADVERTISING

"Oh, I see, father," Ruth answered, when her father continued insisting on her marriage to young Kent, "of course, your great experience makes anything you say deserving of the highest consideration.

"But permit me to offer a suggestion you may, upon reflec-

tion, recognize as valuable.

"It is this: Why not turn me over to the General Manager of your Sales Department?"

"To my Sales Manager? What do you mean, Ruth? Are you

crazy?"

"I mean that for once you are on the verge of a serious business blunder that is likely to cause you heavy loss."

"Make a loss! I?" he snorted; "when I make a loss, about

everybody in my line will first be broke!"

"That's just the trouble," Ruth retorted; "you are now venturing out of your line of business, at least your usual line of business, although you do not seem to realize it."

"Well, I guess you must be crazy," he snapped, with a very

near approach to a loss of his temper.

"I be caught venturing outside my line of business? Huh!

not in a million years.

"That's where I've got 'em; know my line a little better than the rest do and stick tight to it—put in more time applying what I know than they do, put in all my time at it, while most of 'em go scatter-gunning into strange territory. Do you suppose you could explain what you imagine you mean?"

"Easily, father. The products of your mills sell throughout the land, do they not?"

"Throughout the land? Why, girl, they're in every market

of the world."

"Quite so; I fancied as much. And you have an elaborate sales organization finetoothcombing all the markets of the world for the lines of easiest resistance, for the points where your wares will bring you the largest profits, have you not?"

"Elaborate? Why, it's ornate, girl; I guess my Sales Department don't miss much," he chuckled; "the other fellows are welcome to anything we overlook."

"Splendid! So much the better. And that sales organization you really regard as among the best, capable of getting the highest price your goods could possibly be made to fetch?"

"Among the best? Why, girl, it's the best. Wouldn't surprise me if my Sales Manager should contrive to trade a shipload of ice to the Esquimaux for a cargo of ivory and peltries."

"Excellent. Then I take it you consider he might be effective with, say, the Sultan of Turkey, or the Shah of Persia, with English dukes or perhaps with the fabulously rich Hindu

princes?"

"Would he? Well, he'd about trade 'em out of their crowns!" And then, presently, his hawk eyes narrowed and glaring, the gnarled fingers nervously combing the thin gray beard, he added, "Good idea! Brilliant, by Sam Hill. Wonder what we've got he might start advertising and convincing 'em they need in their business?"

"But, sir, you bave something they need, or might be con-

vinced they want—in their business."

"I bave!" he exploded, too breathless to say more.

"You assuredly have, sir, and you are about to sacrifice perhaps the greatest opportunity of your life, so far as I have

heard anything of your plans.

"If you are really serious and think you could reach them by advertising, you might begin tomorrow. It's not yet too late, but soon it will be if you don't open your eyes and stir yourself."

"Reach them! By advertising! Why, by advertising I'd reach all but the disembodied spirits, and," with a grim chuckle, "I'm not sure we could not run even them a close race with postered aeroplanes.

"Advertising! It's the very life-blood of business, your brains the heart pump that energizes its flow through every artery

THE VALUE OF ADVERTISING

and vein of the consuming world, the stronger the pump the richer the flow.

"Cut your broadcast advertising, and rapidly your markets narrow; stop it, and soon you'll find your customers limited

to your immediate neighbors.

"Potentates, princes, dukes—well, I'd cut out the English dukes, but there should be good gunning among the Birmingham ironmasters and Manchester cotton spinners; they're

the boys able to buy.

"But your Orientals appeal to me. Reach 'em! Why, I'd tag the tails of their sacred elephants, be-poster their palaces and temples, slip beautiful lithograph inserts among the leaves of their pet heathen scriptures, tattoo the ladies of their harems! "Reach them! Just show me the goods, and then watch me!"

"But, sir, I'm telling you that you have the goods—goods that will lend themselves, tolerably well, to lithographic illustration, although I must say I'd be sorry to see them exploited on elephant tails or the naked bodies of harem favorites."

"Well, maybe you can manage to tell me what in Sam Hill they are. I'll—"

"One moment, sir; I understood you to admit your business, and hence your profits, would dwindle to insignificance if, by dropping advertising, you limited your sales propaganda to your neighbors. Am I correct?"

"Certainly you are; any fool could see that out of half an eye."
"And I may also assume you often if not always find the best buyers for your wares by ranging far from our immedi-

ate neighborhood?"

"Sure as you're born; but where are the goods? Tell me, girl,

where are the goods?"

For whole minutes Ruth stood eyeing coldly the hard, greedy

old face, and then she almost whispered,

"I am the goods, sir! Have you ever offered me to any local buyers? Am I not worth advertising? Turn me over to your Sales Manager, and see if he does not find a customer at figures that will make you ashamed of the buyer you want to turn me over to."





CHAPTER VIII A JUNGLE WOOING

From Tugan Esa took the birds he had brought her and toyed smilingly with the brilliant plumage of the guacamayo, pleased as any duchess with some wonderful new gown stuff proposed by Paquin, until presently, in tone of gentle resentment, Tugan said:

"And there's the pava, too, Esa; you have not noticed it. My, but it's tender. Feel of its breast, plump and round as—

plump as yours, little Esa."

"Yes, yes, Tugan," she answered, "I've felt it and am sure I never saw a finer. It's a good Tugan and a cunning hunter!"

At which the boy's dusky cheeks reddened with pride and pleasure while he deftly twirled the long tube of his blow gun.

Then suddenly his face fell somber as he replied:

"So you tell me, and how I love to hear you say it; but for a long time, Esa, you have not acted like so you really thought. Has Tugan displeased you in any way?"

"Why, no, boy; what a silly thing of you to say. You're always doing for me, always hunting chance to do more. What

is it you mean?"

"Oh, Esa, I hardly know myself, only, well, you talk to me like father speaks to his warriors, and often when I am in hand reach of you, you don't seem to know that I am near,

just like I was dead or high up on Mt. Apo."

"But what a foolish boy! Why, you must know I like you better than anyone, unless, maybe Usup. Only so many things are ringing in my head; so many, many that they are more than all the leaves that clothe Mt. Apo. Better than any other I like you near me, but somehow, I don't know why, I've no more wants than those I've willed I shall have."

"But, little Esa," and he appealingly held out his hands, "aren't you going to will to want me like you used to, always

near you? Won't you will to let me ask you of Usup, one of these days when you are a little bigger?"

For some time the maid stood still as a statue, her great almond eyes wide and expressionless of deep introspection.

At length, turning on Tugan a puzzling but kindly face, she answered:

"I just don't know, boy. I've got to wait to know myself. Maybe Usup—maybe no one may ask him how much he holds Esa worth."

"But, tell me, lorita mia," he gently urged, "why is it so? why so often do the shadows chase the smiles from your face; why do you pass so many mornings wandering alone, why all your afternoons alone aloft with Usup; why do you not know I am beside you when your eyes get big and still like those of one just killed? Why, oh, tell me why, little Esa, are these strange things, so far unlike your sisters of Pugsan?"

On him her great eyes fixed, and so they stayed until to him it seemed they were looking through and past him into the remotest depths of the forest—where surely they must be seeing things weird and terrible Tugan knows nothing of, for they harden and glare in such an uncanny way that he shudders, shrinks back and stammers:

"Never mind, Esa, I—I don't think I quite want to know."
Rousing slowly at sound of his voice, as from a heavy sleep, and wholly ignoring his question, she ordered sharply:

"Leave these birds with Lancona and fetch my blow gun-

and today you may follow me."

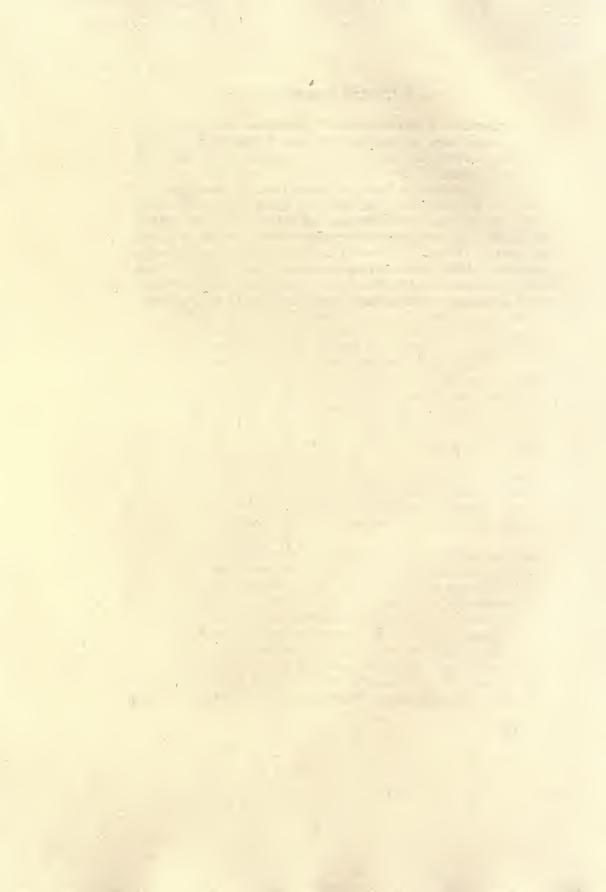
And when he returned a few minutes later, fetching his own bow, quiver and spear as well as Esa's weapon, it was to find her turned, her eyes fixed on the mysterious depths of the pool, her little toes nervously questing in the sand—probably wondering whether Busau was haunting the pool's waters or any of Munowog's big black eggs were hatching thereabouts.

Taking from Tugan her blow gun and its sheaf of tiny arrows, slender and sharp as pins and scarce ten inches long, each tufted with a wisp of the snowy fiber that annually whitens the heads of the cotton trees, and stained of point to

A JUNGLE WOOING

an ominous brown by the poison in which they have been dipped, Esa instantly was transformed back to the child she was, bounding away into the jungle at a pace none but the wild folk bred in it can make.

Ducking low arching bush, writhing through tangles of bejucos that are literally spider webs for white feet, now sinking deep in humid masses of rotting vegetation and then leaping fallen forest monarchs or swarming over those too high to leap, the two lithe brown bodies flashed through depths dusky as the sea's floor, swift as the shadows of darting sharks, Esa leading, Tugan hard on her heels, silent both, despite their rapid pace, as the birds that darted away at their approach.





CHAPTER IX

JOYS AND TERRORS OF THE JUNGLE

Esa was ever leading.

On and on she raced, straight as the close-twilled forest growths permitted save where prudence learned of Usup made her give wide elbow room to the *Limbingen*, for in all the vast region occupied by the hill tribes there are no roads or even footpaths of any description—paths would serve all too well

to guide and expedite the attacks of enemies.

On and on, deer and pigs scurrying away at her approach, wise of untold generations of experience of the nastily pricking things with which two-legged folk are ever chasing them to their deaths, on till presently she came bang! on a great twenty-foot python, extended asleep among the leaves—stepped on him, but leaped far away before he was fairly coiled for reprisal.

But no more was the hideous head raised, long forked tongue angrily darting, than Tugan's spear had transfixed its thick body and a poisoned dart from Esa's blow gun pierced its

throat.

And there, for the few moments the deadly poison took to finish its work, our two little wild ones stood screaming in delight of their prowess, watching the huge tortured coils mowing bush and sweeping big saplings to slivers until heart action stopped and the hateful monster lay still.

On and on, now racing up steep slopes at little abated pace, up slopes that gave Tugan his first inkling of her purpose—to reach a certain lofty spur of Mt. Apo, on whose crest she

had recently been spending many mornings.

Up they climbed through shadowy labyrinths of the most gigantic vegetation the world holds.

Thick about them were flowers beautiful beyond the dreams

of the sensuous weavers of Bacchanalian wreaths.

Kissed were their hot cheeks by humid airs heavy with strange

exotic fragrances, at once so stimulating and intoxicating that they would charm the breath of life into the withering shell of a Theban mummy.

Around them towered columns of Nature's temples, whose beauty of proportion suggested the majestic dignity of an-

cient Greek architecture.

Down about them hung low, drooping masses of the delicate tracery of nodding leaf and twig that gave the Arabs their airily fantastic style.

There within those labyrinths never do the sun's rays pene-

trate.

Only from the margins of the larger streams may one see that here and there the cloudless zenith stripes the green for-

est roof with pale sapphire bands.

And when the wind is sleeping in distant caverns or mustering its forces high aloft among the mountain peaks, then the hand of God paints upon stilled waters pictures of the infinite riches with which He has margined them.

Poetry? Here, near by, surely must reside its very spirit.

For here one's every languorous sense is suffused with the most intoxicating perfumes, melodies and beauties of nature.

Here flower-wreathed towering trunks that are the offspring of remote centuries fire the imagination with visions of mad revel in the palaces of ancient days.

Here the fragile beauty of orchids peoples the shadows with

the tantalizing forms of dancing nymphs.

Nor is the appeal of these dusky labyrinths limited to the voluptuous.

Far from it.

For here is the primitive abode of all pathos and tragedy.

Here first sounded the most saddening moans of the one and

the most agonizing screams of the other.

Here began, away back in the early morning of Time, the ruthless struggle for survival of the fittest that may never end so long as men are born and seeds germinate.

Here never may one long dwell with his blither phantasies.

JOYS AND TERRORS OF THE JUNGLE

Here merry carols are quickly followed by shuddering and

What small wonder so many of the primitive races of humanity were sun worshippers when nothing in animate nature thrives that is long denied the sun save the corrupt and

noisome growths?

Here the struggle for the sun's favors is at its bitterest. Here each giant trunk wars ruthlessly to overtop its neighbors and win the sun's largess that alone may serve to rank it above

the dwarfed and feeble it has mastered.

In its turn, sooner or later, each giant trunk falls prey to the implacable enemy all are powerless to resist, that hideous, relentless vegetable python, the matapalo, while the victims it has shouldered aside are loaded with the weight of orchids until their feeble trunks can no longer support the burden, or stripped of leaves or honeycombed of body by insects, who in their turn, of course, must live.

And deep down in the dank darkness about the feet of the giants and the dwarfed, lurk and battle among themselves crowding throngs of the noisome, short-lived herbs and hate-

ful, thorny shrubs.

Ugly caricatures are they of the nobler forms of vegetable life.

Accurately do they typify the dwellers of the underworld of

all the cities man has ever builded.

And hidden among them, and all shrouded in grizzly, festooning mosses, lay the majestic torsos of the mightier monarchs of earlier forest dynasties, quicker prey to effacement by the hand of Time than is the handiwork of the vanished races of men.





CHAPTER X

DREAMING IN THE TREE TOPS

Steadily our two little wild ones climbed until they reached the crest of the spur, where, as Esa well knew, a truly royal palm thrust its emerald crown high above all its neighbors.

Approaching it, with an imperative "Wait!" to Tugan, up the smooth, straight trunk she mounted easily as on a staircase, hitching ahead of her at each step the section of stout vine she had whipped around the palm and held in both hands.

Up she climbed, farther and farther, until, just as she was disappearing into the shelter of the palm's wide-spreading top, she looked to Tugan no bigger than a tiny rodent.

And once come there and perched in her favorite nook, what

a stupendous spectacle lay spread before her!

What a boundless emerald sea whose insistent waves swept up the broad flanks of Mt. Apo, until lost among the mists that hid its head, and lapped the farthest confines of the birdchild's world!

A sea unruffled through the still hours of dawn and eventide when tropical breezes best love to take their rest, wind-swept

and heaving throughout the day!

An emerald sea that there high aloft washed *Dewata's* feet and whose dusky depths down far below her were the haunt of *Busau*, of *Munowog* and his demon brood, the *Limbings!*

Yes, and far away beyond that emerald sea, near where the sun retires to rest, there dwell the terrible Moros, and off somewhere on their right, beyond big waters, dwell the Paddies, whose weapons smoke like Mt. Apo!

Esa shivers and nestles deeper into better concealment

among the palm's broad fronds.

What if any of the mighty of *Dewata's* hierarchy should see her and manifest themselves?

She certainly would die of fright.

As for the Moros and the Paddies, for them she does not

care; even should they see her they could not reach her, for neither are tree folk like the Monobos.

Ah! but is she not glad she brought Tugan? To be sure, there's nothing he could do to oppose or charm away the Mighty Ones, but it is indeed good to have near something that is warm and walks and climbs and talks as she does.

Thus, while it was the fascination Usup's tribal gods had for her that brought her there, for broad outlook over the vast domain they ruled, for a time their lure was effaced by her fear of them, and she sat shivering like the little child she was.

But presently the great somber almond eyes grew fixed, and

Esa began to dream.

And through her dreams raced what smokings of Mt. Apo at *Dewata's* mighty sneezes, what terrible shakings and rendings of the earth at the stampings of his feet; what demon revels among the *Limbings* and cruel devil work by *Busau*; what atrocities by the Moros and what stupidities among the Paddies!

Frightful folk were they all, gods and humans alike, but had not Usup taught her how to avoid and escape some and to charm, wheedle or constrain others to the doing of her will, even as he, the great Lukus and Ingorandy, influenced and employed them?

So on and on she dreamed for hours until the heat of the high-mounted sun roused her and she rose from the concealment of her nest, rose brave with the confidence come of a growing sense of mastery, the dark eyes flashing resolution.

Out and around her she boldly gazed.

Ha! Let them come, any of them, from Dewata down to the littlest Limbing!

She would know how to receive them.

She would show them she was worthy daughter of wise old Usup, fit to take up his mantle when he dropped it! Let them come!

And then suddenly realizing she must race to reach Pugsan before the sun stood straight aloft, and, like all her clan sisters, dutiful to her parents as few daughters of civilization

DREAMING IN THE TREE TOPS

are, down the smooth palm trunk she slid, aided by her vine

There at the palm's foot Tugan awaited her, oddly for a little savage, awake, after dull hours of idle waiting for her de-

scent.

Indeed, there had been no sleep for Tugan that morning for the mystery of the new traits Esa was developing and her strange conduct had set him puzzling to understand them until his head ached. And now that she was again beside him, he was as far from an answer as when she had disappeared among the palm fronds.

"Tired waiting, Tugan?" she smiled.

"Tired? No," he answered, "but in the name of the father of alligators, what have you been doing up there in the palm's top? Asleep, I suppose."

"No, Tugan, not sleeping, and yet dreaming."

"Dreaming! Now how could you dream without first sleeping? You must be getting wise as Usup or crazy as Punungan

when he drinks his fill of palm wine."

"Were you to get like me—only you won't—you would know that one may dream more waking than sleeping"—shortly adding, after a tired sigh at thought of the heavy tasks her father was setting her, "I may get as crazy as Punungan, but never as wise as Usup."

"Wouldn't get like you if I could," the boy pouted, "for you can't make anything out of your dreams, or kill and eat them. More fun out in the bush with your bow or blow gun in an hour than in a dream a day long—nor will a dream fill an

empty belly."

When, having in mind the generous offerings to his gods Usup easily procured—and appropriated—she broadly smiled and replied, "Ah, but there's where you're wrong again, Tugan, for so you know how to profit by dreams, they will feed more people than can twenty hunters."

Which was about the last word needful to convince him that Esa was too crazy to be worth talking to longer on the sub-

ject.





CHAPTER XI

A HUMAN BAIT

"Well!—Well, may the Merrimac dry up and my turbines lack water if I ever heard the like of that!" growled James Snell, when Ruth proposed she be turned over to his Sales

Manager. "You--"

"Pardon, sir; let's stay wholly rational and try to be logical," Ruth interrupted. "Let's call things by their right names. To you, I'm nothing but a bait with which to tempt and hook the richest fish your line will reach. That's all my marriage means to you."

"You're putting the case brutally hard, young woman; I

won't----

"Pardon again, sir; you know I'm only stating the simple truth.

"Moreover, you cannot pretend to deny I'm the most valuable single asset you have, for on your own admission you are expecting me to bring millions.

"Now, sir; if you are not blind or false to all your business principles, you'll cease limiting the play of your bait to the

slenderly stocked neighborhood pools.

"Your reel holds a line long enough to girdle and criss-cross

the earth. Free the reel and let your line out.

"Flick your bait about among the fat fish of New York and Pittsburg and Chicago, of London and Constantinople, of Teheran and Central India. Yes, even fish the foul Ganges, for matters not to you the slime he haunts so your fish weighs!"

"Ha! Ha! And so you're marking yourself up, young woman;

you're-__'"

"No, sir; were I doing the price making, I'd be marking down, not up. But it's not a case of price making with you. Rather, it's just an auction, and you're risking me before a stupidly small audience.

"Am I not worth advertising, I repeat? Would I not make

an effective, yes, perhaps even a strikingly pleasing subject

for the best half-tone the modern processes produce?

"Circulate me broadly, whether as an insert in heathen scriptures, as you propose, or otherwise, are you not pretty sure to find a higher bidder for me than young Kent? Especially if such legend as your resourceful Sales Manager devises for the striking enumeration of my charms should also display, in bold type, whatever arrangement of seven figures you calculate will represent the fortune you are intending to leave me?"

The cruel old mill master's usually pallid face purpled with anger, but it was in very cold, low tones he answered, "Huh! Not such a bad idea. Might try it if I'd thought of it myself.

"But since I'm not in the habit of changing plans I've once settled on, either you will accept and marry young Kent or two figures, of low denomination at that, will represent the

value of the fortune I'll leave you!"

To which Ruth just as firmly answered, "Quite as you like as regards your money; indeed, if it has all come to you as filthy as would be that you now seek to annex at my expense, I'm sure I don't want a penny of it.

"But as for my marriage, you can depend that will be quite as I like, when and with whom I like, and you may be sure

young Kent will never be considered by me."

The huge, rude figure shook slightly with rage.

The pale blue fish eyes gleamed balefully as those of a roused reptile.

The great misshapen fingers worked nervously as if eager to

seize her throat or hurl a missile at her head.

And doubtless he would have seized or struck her but for his lifelong practice of contriving crueler punishment than any his own hard hands could deliver.

But presently, the clutching fingers stilled. The purple face faded to pasty white.

And then there turned and left the room a characteristic specimen of a hideous modern type that neither religion nor other refining influences of civilization have sufficed to up-

A HUMAN BAIT

lift a single jot above squalid unlettered brutes except in knowledge that more profit may be had of their victims by exhausting their muscles in labor than by slaying them and

gnawing their bones.

And as he marched down the path toward his mills, blind to the flowers that lined it, indifferent to their fragrance, deaf to the sweet piping of the birds perched in the arching elms, less God-fearing, despite all his protestations and all his painstaking observance of his creed's external forms, than any pagan, he growled through set teeth:

"By God! but that girl would make a great business woman, if I could only break her! Well, if I can't, it will be make her own living for her. Not a penny of mine shall she have!"





CHAPTER XII

BATTLING WITH THE WILD BOAR

Leaving the royal palm, away home-bound Esa and Tugan sped through the forest, Esa as usual gliding in the lead, and snatching a flower here and there until, shortly, she had herself decked with a crown far more beautiful if not so regal as the emerald crest of the palm she had just left, for still in all but her knowledge of Usup's grim lore she was just a romping, forest child.

Nor, as it happened, was their return to be less free of start-

ling incident than was their coming.

For not far had they gone before who should step out upon them from concealment in bush than Lancona, so suddenly that instinctively they raised their weapons, but fortunately so near they recognized her before they had time to wield them.

And clearly Lancona herself had been no less startled than they, for she was replacing a little blow gun dart among its mates. Such are the surprises of jungle life and so must jungle folk

ever be on the alert to meet them.

"Ah, so it's you, young ones," she smiled; "you gave me a fright; I could not fancy what folk could be coming at such

speed."

And then she picked up the bundle of potent herbs she had been gathering, all carefully wrapped in the broad leaves of the *platanillo* to guard them from the prying eyes of the unanointed in the secrets of her medicinal art, and fell into pace with them.

Perhaps it was Dewata who sent her to them.

Who knows?

Anyway, it was not long before they were so thinking, and when they got to Pugsan and told Usup, he agreed it must be so.

For only a little way had the three proceeded together before they met a lone wild boar, a huge, grizzled ancient of his mob, who like most old males of the larger four-footed

folk met flocking by themselves, will more often fight than run.

Nor was he an exception.

No more had his fierce little eyes spied them than at them he charged, bristles and ears straight upstanding and great tusks gnashing, tusks big and sharp enough to rip the heart out of an alligator at a single slash.

Sprung so suddenly upon them was the peril, that, had the children been by themselves, surely one or both had perished.

Neither screamed, nor much less did they shirk or try to fly; but their little hearts were so aflutter of the surprise and the terror of it, and their little hands so inexperienced in meeting such a jack-out-o'-the-box emergency, that Esa's dart struck no better than a leg, whence its poison would be slow to reach and stop the heart, and Tugan's arrow splintered on the massive head—just enough to sharply spur the boar's fury.

Instantly dropping bow, Tugan bravely met the charge with a spear thrust that tore the grizzled side but glanced along the ribs, and paid for his temerity by being sent to earth with

a gaping gash deep in the muscles of the thigh.

But then, just as the boar turned upon Esa, Lancona, slower to make ready for action than the children but steady of her years of experience, landed a blow-gun dart deep in a madly blinking eye that set the monster whirling in circles and shrilly squealing of pain until she had time to snatch Tugan's spear and finish him with a stab behind the shoulder.

Useful mothers does jungle life make, ready for any emergency—and devoted as well, ever utterly reckless of self

where their young are threatened.

Esa? Worthy daughter of Lancona was she, or would be in time when she had steadied a bit, for in the seconds that sufficed for these happenings she had placed three more darts in the big enemy, but so badly that they could not have sufficed to save her had she been alone.

And Tugan? Oh, Lancona did not make much of a scratch like that. Trifles like that were minor incidents among the perils jungle folk constantly run. Soon her shrewdly working

herbs would heal it.



CHAPTER XIII

"WORK, MOTHER; I'LL WORK"

Meantime, Ruth stood where her father had left her, still

and quite as white as a marble statue.

Presently her mother, who had sat throughout the interview a silent and more or less impassive listener, disciplined from her youth to hold her tongue and never to question James Snell's mandates, approached, laid her hand on the girl's shoulder and said:

"But, Ruth, girl, you're forgetting we've always got to do just what pa says. He don't never change his mind. If you don't take young Kent, pa'll never do for you. What can you

be thinking of? Ain't you afraid?"

"Afraid, mother?" Ruth answered. "I'm far less afraid of anything I may suffer of his not doing for me than of the shame of what he wants to do to me—to marry me to a fool."

"But when he turns you out of the house, what will I do,

daughter?"

"You, mother? Oh, you'll continue doing what you've always done, and will never cease doing while you live—you'll continue doing his will;" adding, after a short pause, "but not for me; none of his cruel will for me—nor will I wait to be turned out by him."

"But what can you do, daughter, by yourself?"

"I'm sure I've not thought yet, mother, but at least I can undo his brutal plan to barter his own flesh and blood for money.

"And perhaps somewhere, somehow, I can do something for

humanity to offset his crimes against it."

"Crimes, daughter? That's a hard word. Surely you cannot mean to apply it to such a just and law-abiding man as pa! Crimes the courts punish, and they've never had pa in the court."

"Ah, mother," Ruth wearily sighed, "too many, far too many

of the biggest crimes against humanity the courts do not punish. "Just and law-abiding he? Yes, perhaps; just when justice cannot defeat his plans or lessen his profits; law-abiding where farther o'erstepping the law would compromise him."

"But where-how could you support yourself, daughter,

after father cuts you off?"

"Work, mother, I'll work! Has not father taught us to work, ground it into us until we'd not know how or where to begin at trying to play? I'll work, to be sure, since I don't know how to play—and may not play if I would. I'll teach, I think. Home discipline and Wellesley should have made me a capable propagandist."

"But where will you begin, Ruth?"

"Either at the very top or at the very bottom of the social ladder, mother, for the masses on its mid rungs are sane and clean enough not to need teaching so badly, can be safely trusted to themselves.

"It matters not the least at which end I begin.

"So many of those at the top of the ladder are dwarfed of soul to the measure of Stone Age types of manhood and womanhood and are so corrupt of vices that would shock the rawest Stone Age brutes that they need purification as badly as the jungle savages need uplift out of their ignorance.

"I'll go to the wilderness, mother, to any wilderness, say to the Philippine Islands, and teach my naked sister of the jungle to clothe herself, or else I'll stay at home and try to teach my sister of the *baute monde* the shameless viciousness of half

clothing herself.

"Successful with either that far, I shall have hopes of convincing her God has given her a mind with which she may think and hands that may be better employed than in decking herself with gawds—to which the one is as much addicted as the other."

"But, child, what could you hope to accomplish alone?"
"Ah, mother, I'd not be working alone, I'm thinking.

"In savagery, possibly; yes.

"But here so little would I be alone that instead I'd be only

an insignificant unit of the vast, irresistible army of good women that shortly will be bursting all the last of the barriers the world over that limit their privileges, an army that will shortly efface the last of the monarchies and will purify republics—the only army that can be looked to to purify private and public life and uplift the races.

"Man has had his chance, mother. He has been tried and

found wanting.

"Since the dawn of history, the wick of his intellect has been alight and burning, but it has not sufficed to light humanity materially nearer to the practice of the immortal precepts of the Sermon on the Mount than prevailed when the Christ spoke it.

"Perhaps those precepts may never be realized. God alone knows. But certainly they can never be realized so long as any form of human bondage exists upon the earth. For the basic principles of those precepts are Freedom, Equality,

Justice.

"Man has had his chance, a free, untrammelled chance. He has gone far and done much. But where in all the world to-day is not Freedom still a fledgling, Equality a mockery and

Justice a reproach?

"Where is Justice so long as laws of primogeniture and free right to disinherit may serve to fatten a fool or rascally rake or starve a daughter who asserts her independence of greedy family plans for her disposal?

"Where is Equality so long as lords may continue lording

it and money creates castes?

"Where is Freedom until the laws give women equal rights and privileges with men?

"Surely men must be victims of mental strabismus. "Else they had gone infinitely farther, and higher.

"Freely have they given of their lives and gold, in millions of both, to strike from all blacks their shackles—and yet just as stubbornly have they fought woman's struggles for intellectual and political equality and privilege.

"Can human bondage cease so long as woman is denied equal

privilege with men and fathers constrain daughters to marry where they'll fetch the most?

"Never; never, mother.

"But, thank God, the dawn is breaking, the dawn of the day that shall be made immortally glorious by the emancipation

of woman.

"Light the wick of woman's intellect, give free play in public affairs to her spiritually acute perceptivity and penetration, make place in the fighting line for her super-masculine readiness of resource and intrepidity, train her steel-nerved hand to the use of the political scalpel, and—well, the millennium won't come, but the world cannot fail to be vastly bettered."

"Freedom! Privilege to do what one likes! I just wonder what that would feel like?" the tired old mother murmured.



CHAPTER XIV THE DATUS

The afternoon of their encounter with the wild boar, probably nothing but Tugan's bad wound, and the fact that she and Lancona had to all but carry him in, saved Esa from chiding by Usup, the mild, kindly chiding which is about the severest chastisement jungle children suffer at the hands of their parents.

Certainly she was very late, too late old Usup decided for a satisfactory lesson, for he was a glutton for work at his self-

imposed pedagogue's task.

Once begun a lesson, he loved to yarn on for hours.

Or perhaps he did not love it, but instead was driven to haste with the instruction of Esa by realization of his advancing age and anxiety to complete her preparation to succeed him

while yet he might.

Then, moreover, the clan had for some time been manifesting, mildly, to be sure, and yet plainly, a keen sense of his neglect of them. They missed the dearly loved melodies of his *kuteebapee* and the wonder and the thrills in which his stories were never lacking.

For before beginning the instruction of Esa, few were the nights they were not assembled in a close huddle around him,

intent upon his absorbing tales.

Wild eyes were fixed upon his, mouths widely gaping.

Eagerly they drank in the miraculous doings he recounted, whether it was of the Moros, the Paddies or their gods he was

speaking.

For he talked to them just as freely of *Dewata* and his familiars as of the tribe's history and the doings of their neighbors, of all except his private relations and dealings with them.

These, of course, it was not good (for him) that they should

know.

So it was a very well pleased lot of the clan folk that came

crowding close when, that afternoon, Usup passed the word

that the rest of his day was theirs.

Their assembly chamber was a wide space near the village, cleared of bush to better admit the breezes, its high arching leafy roof supported by noble trunks that gave it at once a beauty and a dignity no temple builded by man has ever

equalled.

Small the wonder that in such a temple, presided over by such a wise Lukus and powerful Ingorandy, charmed by such music—the low trills of the kuteehapee, the whispering of the leaves and the gentle murmur of Malbul's purling waters blending in divinely soft melodies—the Pugsan folk sat spellbound, entranced.

That day, Usup elected to tell them of their neighbors, mostly stories they had heard scores of times but that they never

wearied of hearing.

As the Moros were their own next neighbors, he began, so the Filipinos, the original wild tribesmen whom the Paddies had subjected, peoned, and, in a crude way, instructed, dwelt next beyond the Moros, and among Moros and Filipinos lived the Chinos, cunning traders who got the best of it at bargaining. Their traffic they extended among the hill tribes as fast as they were able, through the influence of the Moro Datus.

Sly people were the Chinos, never risking their necks or goods by any sort of battling, strengthening their hold on the Datus by playing their own tricks—picking their wives from among the kinswomen or the discarded concubines of the Datus, just as the Datus' harems are seldom lacking in relatives of the chiefs or *Ingorandys* of their hill neighbors.

The mass of the Moros he always found good people.

They are brave in war and desperate fighters, but kind to their families and the few slaves the Datus' relentless squeez-

ing of them permits them to own.

Honest they are, too, as are all Monobos, and devoted to the one wife of their choice as are the guacamayos, who never are seen separated from their mates, whether flying or perched, as all jungle folk well know, and their tongues are straight.

THE DATUS

But with the Datus, ah, it is very different.

Their tongues are crooked as the hill brooks, and all the things they think and do are crooked as their tongues.

Their lives are bad, all bad.

Even when they swear by their Allah, any who believe them are deceived.

Meaner and more cowardly than the lowest of their slaves, they have a tigre's love of torturing all they can fix their claws in before sucking the life blood, and cruel are they to their own people as to the hill tribes they war upon, until they are ready to purchase peace with tribute.

Slaves and loot, slaves robbed of their neighbors and loot they call taxes squeezed from their own clan and others they can subjugate, that's all the Datus live for, except women.

For the richer they grow the bigger houses do they build and call harems and the more women do they crowd into them, uncontent with one woman as no right-living man should be.

Chiefly off the Datus do the Chinos fatten.

To them they sell the pretty stuffs, soft and bright-hued as mariposa wings, with which they love to clothe themselves, wonderful good things to eat or to have, and the powerful Black Poison they touch fire to and suck the smoke of to make sleep come.

But bad as he is, isn't the Datu a grand sight when he goes

abroad?

His legs are encased in close clinging stuff, shoulders covered by a tight jacket all brilliant-colored as the brightest lora's wing and gleaming with metals so hard to get and dear none but Datus may have them.

Many folds of other stuffs are wrapped around his head.

The kris in his girdle has a handle that shines bright yellow and is stuck full of glittering stones, each one costing the price of more than a hundred of the prettiest girls ever auctioned to bidders for the harems!

And his following is only a little less gaudily decked than is he.

First comes his sword bearer and executioner, ever at his el-

bow, ready to do his bloody behests.

At his left walks his umbrella bearer, sheltering him from

the sun; on his right, the bearer of his Buyo box.

And trailing behind these, like the tail of the great lights Dewata now and then sends across the sky to manifest His power to His people, is a long string of his secretaries and sub-chiefs.

The Buyo box? Ah, that is the stimulant the Moros love.

It may be good—Usup has never tried it—but how hideous it makes them, turns the white teeth *Dewata* gave them black as *Munowog's* eggs.

Do they eat the box?

No, no; they eat what it contains, the betel-nuts, fruit of the bonga palm, mixed with a white powder they call lime and get by burning certain kinds of stone.

Stained with cochineal and tobacco, the mess is flavored with the sour juices of the yellow fruit that grows on trees in their

gardens.

Wow! but the horrors of black mouths the Moros get from their Buyo boxes!

Drunk; does it make drunk come like the palm wine?

Oh, no; else the Moros would never use it, for their Allah's laws forbid them to use anything that makes drunk come.

It just gives them strength, they say.

And Usup thinks it must be so, for when they have partaken of it they want to talk for hours.

In fact, no Moro, least of all a Datu, will begin any serious

talk until he has chewed his bonga nut.

But then look out for him, lest he talk you to death.



CHAPTER XV

OUT OF BIG HORIZONS ARISE BIG MEN

Like all tropical communities, Cotabato had been drowsing through the torrid heat of mid-afternoon.

With evening drawing near, the fronds of the palms were swaying in riotous joy of the refreshing cool kisses the brisk sea breeze brought them.

Likewise, all Cotabato was abroad afoot, each eager for his

or her reasonable share of the kisses.

For it is the cool breezes of eventide, more than anything else, that quicken the dormant energies of dwellers in the tropics, keep their blood from utter stagnation and rouse them from the mental lethargy to which it is so delightfully easy to succumb.

The town had filched a name it held nothing to justify.

Cota means Fort and Bato stone, and the old stone fort that properly owned the name stood on a hill that rose one hundred and twenty-five feet above the swamps and river that surrounded the half dozen blocks of reclaimed land that held the town, and distant perhaps three hundred yards from it.

While the port of entry for the superbly rich Rio Grande valley and the dense Moro population that occupies it, Cotabato numbers as total population no more than three hundred Filipinos, largely a legacy from the now extinct Spanish minor officialdom, a hundred Chinese, a highly-mixed and speckled assortment of half-breeds, two Spanish merchants and one white planter.

At least, that was its status when the War Department took it over and undertook the administration of the region that

lay behind it.

Nor had the town changed in the meantime, except in the improvement in its sanitation and the construction of barracks for the troops, regulars and native constabulary, quar-

ters for their officers, buildings to house the civil administra-

tion, a hospital, and a school house.

But the civil administration, that is to say, the political administration, was still military, and its local head was the General commanding all the Moro provinces from his head-quarters at Zamboanga.

And that was a day of extraordinary excitement for Cotabato, for the Coast Guard boat *Palawan* nodded lazily at her anchor in Illana Bay, and the General commanding was ar-

rived ashore on a tour of inspection.

That particular General commanding knew good material when he saw it, and let none escape he could utilize. In which he was wise, for, naturally, good material for the tasks confronting him was extremely rare, men of character and ability who were familiar with the Moros and knew their tongue.

In fact, at the moment there was only one such available in all Mindanao, and it was chiefly to persuade him to enter

Government service that the General was come.

Thus it happened that, the cool of evening come, the General and Joseph Morine sat together upon the wall of the old

stone fort that topped Tantual Hill.

Morine was a very remarkable man, the sort that grow more remarkable, and admirable, and useful, under the mellowing of the years. For he was of a rare sort that inspires abiding faith in all who come to know him that the years cannot run on long enough to develop anything to his discredit.

Joseph Morine was one of the type of men it is a positive joy to meet. One glance, and you knew you could trust him—and that he would trust you, if you deserved it. But you would have to deserve it, that was a positive certainty. As well try to deceive the Almighty Intelligence as to trifle with

him.

And yet he was a man as attractive to play with as to work or fight with. Indeed, the wide-set, steel-blue eyes sunk in deep caverns beneath the imposing cranial cliff that towered high above them were so habitually twinkling with kindly humor, that, at first experience of it, you were startled when they

OUT OF BIG HORIZONS ARISE BIG MEN

hardened to the expression of some purpose that you instant-

ly recognized to be as immutable as Destiny.

Nor was the Morine mouth less misleading, what little you saw of it in its ambush behind the great brown, gracefully curved guardsman's mustache. Full were the lips and gentle their expression, while the eyes twinkled humor. But, once roused, immediately the lips were swallowed and there remained naught but a ruthless straight slit that spelled fight or fade to all in contrary interest.

Only the nose was entirely frank and aboveboard. Bold and straight but thin of nostril, the stupidest adversary would know that he could never hope to make that nose get out of

his way until its wearer was dead.

Here was a man quick of wrath but slow to vent it, aggressively bold, but so boldly just that he was incapable of maintaining he was right when he knew he was wrong.

Indeed, to him, justice and equity were his religion.

Any and all forms of wrongdoers he despised and hated.

And heavy fell his hand, almost cruelly sometimes, whenever needful to correct or efface malefaction.

Among the Moros he had lived for some years, as planter and trader, with him a wife well worthy of him and a son who adored him, a lad of ten.

All Moros trusted him, the better Datus because they had learned to esteem him, the bad ones because he had taken oc-

casion to throw the fear of God into them.

Only out of contemplation of big horizons arise big men.

Rarely wide and varied had been the horizons that had

molded and inspired the mind of Joseph Morine.

Indeed, so widely round the world had he ranged that he might be truly described as an adventurer but for the fact his roamings were always with an earnest purpose and that his time was always employed to some useful end.

A native of Australia, with his Irish father, he ranged the bush trails while aboriginal warriors were still raiding, highwaymen preying on the travel to and from the mines, when

the normally upright were having a downright hard time

pacifying the land.

There through his youth a participant in the early struggles of the Australians to free themselves from monarchial chains, Morine acquired the hatred of dynastic hypocrisy and oppression that made him both a close observer and a shrewd analyst of prevailing political conditions wherever his wide travels led him.

Leaving home early, he did not stop going, but with long stays and much hard work en route, until he had pretty well ranged Southern Asia, Central Africa and its East Coast, Europe and North America, finding the United States so far more nearly to his liking than even his native Australia that he had transferred to the States his citizenship.

Thus at the early age of thirty-five, this man had come to know the world as do few men ever come to know it, and its

people and governments had been his favorite study.



CHAPTER XVI THE MORO RAIDERS

No more was Lancona up the morning after Usup's story telling, her fire started by rubbing two dry bamboo sticks together and breakfast boiling in sections of green bamboo laid upon the live coals, than she sent Esa to bind fresh herbs on Tugan's wounds.

The distance from her own nest was short, and soon Esa had reached Tugan's perch and found that Lancona's potion had kept down the fever and that her herbs already had his

wounds healing nicely.

Deftly the already skillful little fingers applied the fresh herbs.

And while she was so engaged Tugan reflectively murmured: "Esa, I think I'm getting more afraid of you every day. You are going to be a greater woman than Lancona. Already, you know all she knows. And since I have been lying here thinking about your strange conduct lately, how you order us around as only a chief or *Ingorandy* may, how you often stand and even talk like one asleep, I've got a notion that Usup is teaching you more of his mysteries than he tells anyone else."

"And so you're getting afraid of me, boy," Esa smiled; "non-sense; the more I may know the more I can do, don't you

think?"

"Yes; but the more you can do, the less you'll want to have

to do with me, I fear."

"Silly Tugan! I'm getting prouder of you. That was a bold stand you made when the boar charged the other day, even if neither your arrow nor your lance hit true. Time and practice will mend your aim, and make you a worthy successor to Punungan, when Busau fails us and some enemy slays him!"

"Maybe; I hope so," Tugan grinned, "so you don't take a notion to head the clan yourself and order us about as you do

me."

"Ah, boy, that's far off," Esa soberly answered; "Punungan and Usup are still strong. Many seasons will the snakes shed their skins before you may wear Punungan's war plumes—and as for me, what should put such a silly thought in your head?"

"Why, because you are now bolder than even Usup—because I'd rather see you Chief and be your man than myself

be Chief without you."

"Well, well; it's a good Tugan and I'm proud of him. He'll surely make the best warrior of all the lads of the village—and he may be sure Esa won't have less than the best, even should Usup want to otherwise dispose of her, which it's not at all likely he will."

"And you mean you really will-"

Laughingly Esa interrupted:

"Think of it! I mean I'll think of it, boy-when the alligators

that are now little have grown big."

And then, after a light slap of the pouting face, she nimbly slid down a vine and raced back for her breakfast, little thinking that many, very many weary days must pass before she would again see the devoted Tugan.

Breakfast over and such plenty in the village that none needed to go prowling into the forest for food, soon all the children and many of the elders were splashing in the Malbul's cool waters, while the rest idled along the margin watching

the sport.

Indeed, the Monobos were so nearly semi-amphibious and spent so much of their time diverting themselves in whatever stream they dwelt on, that it had long been the practice of raiding Moros to pick the early morning or evening hours to locate their quarry, slipping silently up or down streams in their vintas (dugouts) until the merry shouts and splashing of the tree folk pointed the chance of a surprise.

So well were these tactics known by the Monobos, however,

that comparatively few were the actual surprises.

Usually their guards spotted an approaching enemy before they were in striking distance and called warnings that sent

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the clan folk scurrying away through the jungle, quick to disappear as the monkeys whose arboreal activities they rivaled. But that morning Pugsan had no guards out, and dearly did Punungan and his clan folk have to pay for his carelessness.

Raiding vintas were abroad.

A primitive little flotilla, led by Ishmael, the most ruthless Saligan, or sub-chief, of Datu Linta's marauders, was cruising for prey.

Each vinta was crowded with fierce-eyed fanatics to whom

all deniers of Mahomet are anathema.

Lean brown men the vintas carried, naked to the turbans that sheltered their heads from the blazing tropical sun and the waist cloths that held their krises and campilans, the latter the same straight heavy sabers, swelling to wide leaf-shape near the point, that all Mohammedan tribesmen still effect.

Quickly Ishmael made his dispositions once he heard the

clamor of the Pugsan villagers.

Cunningly he landed two-thirds of his force and started

them on a detour that soon had his quarry surrounded.

Then, silent as leopards, his warriors narrowed their investing lines until, presently, and all in an instant, the Monobo laughter was turned to screams of pain, shouts of rage and wails of fear, when crash! Crash! thundered the terrible Moro weapons that roar like Dewata's voice and smoke like Mt. Apo!





CHAPTER XVII

ESA'S FIGHT FOR LIBERTY

If war in general is Hell, then nothing short of fiendish is it when fire-armed men go slaughtering among primitive folk simple as the earlier of Adam's descendants.

Oh, the horror of it, and the wickedness!

And all to profit a lazy, crime-steeped chief, to win him slaves, each of whom captured costs the fighting tribesmen rarely less than half a dozen dead!

And the cruelty of it!

Barbarians?

Yes.

Pagans?

Of course.

But with all their barbarism and paganism, folk of far cleaner lives and a larger assortment of virtues than their captors may truthfully boast, be the wild tribesmen what and their

captors whom they may.

Ah, sure indeed it is that none may intimately know the primitive races and not be filled with mingled resentment and regret that civilization must needs intrude upon their idyllic lives only to demean and bedevil them, for nowhere has such intrusion meant anything better for them, except in such instances as it has mercifully resulted in their extinction.

Crash! Crash! thundered the terrible Moro weapons that

roar like Dewata's voice and smoke like Mt. Apo.

And instantly down dropped several of the tribefolk, writhing of wounds or stiffening in death.

But never are jungle people far from their arms.

Soon long arrows were so stabbing and venomed darts pricking Ishmael's men that for a time made them keep their distance.

In fact, the Moros' old Tower muskets were of immaterially

greater range than the Monobo bows, notwithstanding they had the sulphur of Mt. Apo's crater and the saltpeter of numberless bat caves to draw upon, for no Moros ever attained much skill as powder makers.

Thus for a time it almost seemed the Monobos, gallantly cheered on by Punungan and Usup, had a fighting chance.

But presently the one Remington breechloader the Moros had began to tell.

Down sank old Punungan, of a shot that ruined the feather head-dress Tugan had been expecting to fall heir to.

Over bowled Usup, but, luckily or otherwise, of a glancing

ball that no more than stunned him.

Then, the Monobos' leader gone and their slender stock of arrows and blow-gun darts exhausted, and only their chonta pointed spears remaining with which to withstand the gleaming wave of kris and campilan blades that swept in upon—and over—them, soon the fight was ended.

Many, of course, slipped away through the Moro lines, deftly

as eels.

But when Ishmael closed in his ranks around his captives he found he had a total of fourteen, mostly young children, the sort the Moros prize the most.

Central among them upon the ground still lay old Usup,

with Lancona crouched wailing beside him.

Over them stood little Esa.

Fierce-eyed as a young tigress, Esa brandished the blade of a spear whose haft had been shorn by a campilan blade.

Plainly she was in no mood for surrender.

And when rough old Ishmael himself stepped forward to seize her and pass her to the men who were already engaged in binding the captives in pairs, at him Esa sprang like the young wild thing she was and viciously stabbed the long spear point deep into his shoulder.

"Daughter of a pig?" Ishmael screamed, and raised his kris

to brain her.

But, instead, with a true pirate's greedy second thought,

ESA'S FIGHT FOR LIBERTY

his snaky blade clove the spear point and disarmed her, and

he growled:

"No! Can't afford to slit you, my little beauty! Your kind is too popular in Datu Linta's harem to leave out here for the buitres to fatten on. It's to Datu Linta you go, and may the alligators eat all his young if he is not generous to me for bringing him such a prize."

When the Moros added the Monobo wounded to the Monobo dead, as they soon added all hurt past trying to save them for slavery, stark along the Malbul's shore or scattered among the trees that held their nests lay forty-four victims, mostly

warriors.

But for their victims the Moros paid.

Nine of the twenty-six pirates that made up his vinta crews were already en route to whatever Celestial oasis holds their Prophet, these chiefly the prey of the greedy little blow-gun darts, and six others were nursing spear and arrow thrusts.

But what did this matter to the Datu? His swash-bucklers he could not sell or trade to the Chinos, and plenty of them

remained to fill the vacancies in his vinta crews.

The dead had won him fourteen slaves, mostly young; not such a bad enterprise after all!

Nor from the ranks of Ishmael's survivors was there plaint of their losses.

Was not the Datu their lord and master?

And had not their dead perished fighting the pigs of unbelievers, and so fairly won immortal happiness in the most beautiful of *Allah's* Celestial Gardens?

What better could any honest Moro ask?





CHAPTER XVIII

ALONE WITH THE DEAD AND THE VULTURES

Before the binding of the hands of the captives behind their backs and leashing them together with vines, in groups for transport in the *vintas*, Usup was on his legs, little the worse of the shot that had stunned him, and he, Esa, Lancona and old Dalagan were leashed together.

As for Tugan, alone of all the clan hidden in the family nest in the tree tops when the Moros rushed Pugsan, crippled of the wounds he had received in the fight with the boar, he was

overlooked, or rather under-looked, by the raiders.

But crippled though he was, brave Tugan had done his bit, for the only two Moros that had come within range of his blow-gun made a pair of the nine that did no paddling during Ishmael's return voyage.

There were no lamentations or tears when Ishmael had his

captives bundled into the *vintas*, even from the children.

With savage stoicism, all accepted the situation in sullen silence, all except Esa, who was still shivering of rage, and who, as the *vintas* were pushed out into the stream, turned on Ishmael and viciously spit at him.

"I'll come back, when—when I like!"

"Ah, you think you will, you little beauty," Ishmael savagely growled; "well it won't be in a vinta; when you come back it will be inside the belly of some alligator the Datu may throw you to, if your temper don't get sweeter!"

"Better so than let your Datu make me do anything I don't

like," she hissed back at him.

And then the *vintas*, released to the grip of the Malbul's swift current, quickly drifted out of Tugan's sight, leaving him alone among his dead clan-folk and the cloud of vultures already assembled to feast upon them, but powerless to protect them against the winged black horrors that haunt the march of Moro marauders.

And so for two days lay Tugan, famishing up aloft, while below the vultures gorged themselves to surfeit on what had been his kith and kin.

A sight and situation to drive mad any but a savage!

But with him his marooning until his clansmen returned only served to intensify his hatred of his enemies and sharpen

his cunning.

And for long thereafter the youthful chief shifted the clan daily, and, with a few of his young warriors, himself haunted the Moro frontier seeking human targets for his blow-gun darts, and there making himself such a scourge that shortly many of the outer Moro plantations had to be abandoned.

It was a hard life, to be sure, that kept his people lean and famished, but was he not evening scores and dodging all

claimants of tribute?



CHAPTER XIX VAIN APPEALS TO BUSAU

While Saligan Ishmael's vintas drifted down the Malbul, thinking all dozing but the poperos whose paddles kept them in the main current, Esa whispered to Usup:

"But, Usup, where are Munowog and his Limbings? Where

the terrible Busau? Surely you have invoked them.'

"Yes, Esa, I have," poor old Usup replied. "I'm invoking

them now, especially Busau."

"But harder, Usup; do it harder; promise him daily offerings as long as we live if he will only come and pick these Moros' eyes out while the swine sleep.

"And Dewata! Pray him to stamp his foot and make the earth tremble so that their vintas shall be overturned and we may drag them down with us to feed the children of the father of alligators.

"Harder, Usup! Harder!"

"Ah, Esa," Usup sadly murmured, "I can do no more—and I'm beginning to fear that either *Dewata* is very angry at Punungan and his people for not better guarding themselves against our enemies and His, or else that the wonderful magic of their *Punditas* has summoned the spirit of their Kabungsuwan, or perhaps their *Allah* himself, to defend them against our deities.

"Their magic is terrible, child; think of it.

"The magic that can give them boats big enough to hold a village and weapons that roar like *Dewata*'s voice and smoke like Mt. Apo, may it not also suffice to withstand even *Dewata* and *Busau?*"

"Pig of an unbeliever!" cried Ishmael's harsh voice, for all the time he had been cunningly feigning sleep, "your *Dewata* is as powerless against our *Balbal* as are your bows against our guns and krises.

"And as for our Allah, praised be His name, He is the mightiest

of the mighty.

"Fortunate for you that you conceded His almighty supremacy, for had you hinted otherwise I'd toss you to the Hungry Ones. You'd not be such a loss that the Datu would mind; in no slave mart of the coast would your old carcass fetch more than a fanega of rice or perhaps a fighting chicken.

"But as for that little stinging viper alongside of you, ho! ho! the Datu should be generous, for she will bring many times her weight in rice and beeswax, corn and gutta, to say nothing of fighting chickens and brass cuspidors, perhaps to the value of as much as sixty pesos."

Upon hearing which, Esa ground her white teeth and whis-

pered to herself:

"Ha, if Usup and his gods fail, always there is Lancona—and her herbs that make death come, quick or slow as she likes. I must get from her while she sleeps some of the tiny packets she always carries concealed in her waist cloth. With Lancona's venoms I'll defy their God's magic."

"But tell me, pig," the old Saligan continued, "why was your village so poor? My men could find no stores of food and

yet your fields should give you plenty."

"True, Moro," Usup answered, "plenty do they yield, but when we don't send him half, Mambutu's warriors come and leave us nothing. Go ask Mambutu why we are poor."

leave us nothing. Go ask Mambutu why we are poor."

"Ask him," grinned Ishmael; "why pig, he'll be himself asking quite soon enough what's become of his Monobo dogs of Pugsan—and perhaps be speaking to Datu Linta out of the mouths of the thunder guns if he gets wind of my doings.

"But tell me, what has become of the other Monobos? I've ranged for days without hearing a voice or getting sight of a

village. Where have they drifted?"

"Ask the birds, Moro. How should I know, shut in our little nook of the great forest? Ask the birds that know all the most secret corners of the forest or the fish that cruise its waters."

"Liar of an unbeliever!" shouted Ishmael; "you know your

VAIN APPEALS TO BUSAU

forest and all that happens there better than the Datu knows his rice fields.

"With your knotted vines and bent twigs, your signal fires and drum beats, only *Balbal* knows more than you of what's

going on in the forest."

"Ask your Balbal, then, Moro, if he knows so much," brave old Usup replied, and therefor received a cruel smash across the face, with the flat of Ishmael's kris, that left his mouth more nearly toothless than it had been and set Esa tugging fruitlessly at her bonds.

Already the slowing of the river's current and the dwindling

of the hills told of near approach to the coastal plain.

They were nearing Mambutu's outpost, held by his henchman Masulut. Him Ishmael must avoid, or be sure of pre-

cipitating trouble with Mambutu.

So at the little rancheria of Tituan, occupied by a feudatory of their master, Ishmael landed for the twelve mile march through the forest to the town of Ganta, on the Degao River, whence Datu Linta ruled.

But before beginning the march his dead bandits must be disposed of. And there they were buried, each wrapped in folds of the cleanest white linen, each snugly stowed beneath planks whose bottom rested at one side of the body and upon the bottom of each grave and were inclined against the opposite side of the grave's top, and upon these planks the earth was piled—this weird manner of burial a legacy from their pagan ancestors which the Mohammedan *Punditas* had never managed to take from them.

For it is still a current belief among the Moros that Balbal attacks all dead and tries to tear their hearts out, and so deprive them of all hope of a future life in the Gardens of Allab.

Hence their practice to leave the dead free space wherein to defend themselves against *Balbal's* attacks.

Indeed, the Balbal of the Moros, as also the Assoung of the Filipinos, is virtually a full blood brother to the Monobo Busau, capable of assuming an infinite variety of hideous forms,

and to him all disasters and uncanny happenings are attributed.

And so strongly do they still hold to shreds of their paganism that the Mohammedan oath does not suffice them. Hence all Moros swear "by the thirty chapters of the Koran, and if I lie may the alligators eat my entrails or may my belly burst, and may Balbal tear my heart out."

The prayers of the Pundita ended, Ishmael's little column

took up its march for Ganta.

The journey across the divide to the Degao River was without incident until, upon near approach to Ganta, Ishmael began firing salvos that soon had all the villagers tumbling out to meet the successful raiders.

And since a brief inspection was about all the labor and excitement Datu Linta could venture in one day, he ordered that they be apportioned among the villagers, to be housed and fed for the night, and be brought before him in the midforenoon of the next day.



CHAPTER XX

BLINKING SLAVERY AND POLYGAMY

From their seat on the top of the walls of the old stone fort, Morine pointed out to the General the objects of interest in the wide landscape.

Miles away to the west, the bright green of the marshlands

is bordered by the sapphire of Illana Bay.

To the north, nestling among those lofty ranges, lies Lake Lanao, around whose borders dwell the most independent and warlike of the Datus, desperate fighters, but as a rule, like the majority of the Moros of the Rio Grande valley, industrious, peaceful people when left alone.

There far in the east, now hidden in clouds but usually plainly visible at dawn, towers Mt. Apo, the perpetually smoking volcano, around whose foot and whose slopes the wild Mono-

bos make their tree-top homes.

And off in the south stands the great volcano Matutun, now long dormant, that figures much in ancient Mindanao my-

thology and history.

Yes, and right at their feet, pouring in and out with the tides, is the swirling, turgid current of the Rio Grande, whose great ten-mile-wide valley is probably second to none but that of the Saigon in fertility and ease of irrigation, and thronging in this valley is the densest Moro population the island holds.

Presently the General began: "Morine, I want you in the

service."

"For what service, General?" asked Morine.

"As Secretary of this Province."

"I am sorry, General, but I cannot accept the post."

"Why not?"

"Because as Secretary, General, I'd be useless to you."

"Nonsense; man, you are the only timber available fit to fill it. You know these people and have their confidence. You

will come nearer controlling them by diplomacy than I can with troops."

Perhaps I might, if I had freedom and authority to use my own judgment. Make me governor, General, and I will try."

"But I can't do that, Morine; the governor of the province must be an officer of the army, or rank at least as captain."

"Precisely; and there is just the trouble, General. Of what value my knowledge and experience while subject always to the well-intentioned but disastrous overruling of a superior who is totally ignorant of the language, character and tradition of the Moros?"

"Doubtless you are right, Morine, entirely right, but mean-

time I'm hobbled by the regulations.

"But, by Jove! I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll appoint Captain—Governor of the Province and you Secretary; and then, by ordering him to detached service, you as Secretary will be left in undisputed authority over these beauties. How will that do?"

"Magnifico, General. And you can count on me to do my

best."

"Right, Morine, and you can rely on my whole-hearted support. Goodness knows your job is one the best man might fail to draw credit from. I'll issue the necessary orders tonight."

"What do you desire to advise me as to policy, General?"

"Oh, policy? Simple enough, Morine, in theory, though doubtless you'll find it hard enough to carry out in practice. Extend our influence and control over these Sultans and Datus as rapidly as possible, peacefully where you can, but extend it. Of course, the Administration at Washington and the home public in general will expect us to immediately abolish slavery and polygamy. That's hitting them hard, but it has got to be done."

"Perhaps, but—not by me, General. Why, General, you must know that slavery and polygamy are interknit with their religion; for both they regard themselves as holding Di-

vine authority and sanction."

"Nonsense, Morine! But, yes, I dare say; these yellow men

BLINKING SLAVERY AND POLYGAMY

flash up out of their alleged sacred scriptures full absolution

for all their pet vices."

"Ah, General, but their Koran is not so much younger than our New Testament, and the one is quite as sacred to them as is the other to us."

"To be sure; certainly. But all the same they must be made to free their slaves and chuck their spare wives. No less than

that will our home folk tolerate.

"Blink at slavery and a plurality of wives in any territory subject to the authority of Uncle Sam! Why, to do so would be to throw the gaff into the Administration at the next elections, to a certainty. We've got to get busy right off the

bat and make good."

"Then, General, you may be sure the Administration is due for a gaffing, unless you of the War Department pull the wool over Administration eyes or the Administration can cozen the public into believing it is accomplishing—the impossible."

"That's a word we don't recognize in the War Department, Morine—impossible. Orders recognize no impossibilities."

"Pardon me, General, but permit me to assure you that you are up against nothing less than the impossible here, when you propose to abolish Moro slavery and polygamy."

"But surely we can issue decrees of abolition, make a bold

start and score some progress."

"Certainly, General; we can make a start, tomorrow, tonight, any time, and we can make progress, but I solemnly assure you that every step of our progress will be over the corpses of the Moros we have slain.

"Yes, General, and in time we can succeed—whenever we can manage to complete the virtual extermination of the

Moro race. Not a moment earlier, sir."

"Bad as that, is it, Morine?"

"Absolutely bad as that, sir; and of course you realize what it means, the way it must be accepted by the world, as a Religious War, Cross against Crescent! And that don't fit well into the general scheme of Twentieth Century Ideals, does it?"

"Not notably well, I must say, Morine. But what the devil

are we to do? What can you suggest?"

"If the trick is to be done at all, sir, it must be through the establishment among them of strictly nonsectarian schools which shall convey no hint of seducing their young from the religion of Islam, by relentlessly crushing the marauding element among them but interfering as little as possible in any way with the industrious and peaceable.

"Thus, through much time, gradually but surely, the lessons taught in our schools and the object lessons had from observation of the superiority of our civilization may win them

over."

"Education! Educate the Moros out of their slavery and polygamy! That means educate them to Christianity, a task

of generations."

"Just that. Educate them. And since nowhere in the world has the propaganda of Christian missionaries made the least headway against Mohammedanism, or the sword of the Cross accomplished more than to drive into more remote isolation the sons of the Prophet whom it has not exterminated, what remains that may succeed but education?"

"Why, nothing, apparently, if you are right, as I dare say

you are. But just how would you proceed?"

"Deal with them with firmness, with the iron hand that alone they will respect, but with justice and mercy, and extend our schools. Begin by surprising, thrashing and humbling the pride of any Datus who question our authority, and then hold them responsible for the peace of their districts. Leave it to them to crush the marauders, among their neighbors as well as among themselves. And don't ask questions. They will find means to efface any we tell them are superfluous that we are best knowing nothing of."

"You mean--"

"Never mind what I mean, sir, please. I know my Moros. Their ways are dark Oriental ways, but eminently practical. They are great at short and easy cuts, but they get thereoften without any actual physical cutting at all. Sabe?"

BLINKING SLAVERY AND POLYGAMY

And then, without waiting for further comment by the General, Morine continued, "And what of my staff, sir?"

"Why, Morine, for the present, at least, you'll have to be

your own staff, everybody from judge to clerk."

"But, General, I understand that while the Administration has decreed the suspension of military laws throughout the Islands, it has not specifically directed the application of the civil code in the Moro Provinces. Whatever am I to do for law?"

"Well, since we've got to leave these Moros their gospel, why not deal with their malefactors according to their own

law for the present?"

"Yes, sir, that will do, with reservations. Sometimes the Koran is merciless. I'd hardly manage to get my own consent to decree the stoning to death of an adulteress."

"Hardly! But it's all up to you, for I have faith in your discretion. But it's time for chow, my boy. Let's descend."

The return was made in silence. But as they were entering the town the General laid his hand on Morine's shoulder and remarked:

"Mr. Acting Governor, I'm very much afraid you are right; to save the Administration's face, it will have to be a case of wool pulling or cozening."





CHAPTER XXI

BALBAL MASQUERADING AS A TEMPTRESS

Duly the next morning Ishmael conducted the captives to the house of his chief and there paraded them for Datu Linta's inspection.

All of them, old and young, male and female, were stripped entirely naked, and each in turn the shrewd old dealer in human flesh examined in most minute detail, with all the cunning of the canniest dealer in horseflesh to detect alike all merits and defects.

One by one, he opened their mouths to make sure their teeth were sound, poked and pinched their bodies, carefully felt and flexed the muscles of their arms and legs, studied their feet.

Obscure indeed the blemish or the good point that could escape his detection.

And as he proceeded with his task, from time to time he dictated memoranda respecting each to the Kali, or judge, who attended him.

Next, each was tested at running, swimming, load carrying, canoe paddling, and the women and the elder girls were made to try their deftness at the rude Moro looms—for any such as might prove so handy could be held for a higher price.

Esa, the hawk-eyed old voluptuary handled and considered with obvious interest and satisfaction, evidently indisposed

to part with her.

But when, finally, after all tests were finished and Esa again stood before him, streaming with sweat and heaving of breast of the violent paddling and running she had been doing, but teeth tight set, face hard and eyes burning with resentment, the Datu turned to his Kali and remarked:

"Better the money she'll fetch than the girl; mark her for

sale with the rest.

"She's too much like Ina na Manuk's fighting chicken, Lan-

ang-she'll fight till she's dead.

"Looks like she might be *Balbal* masquerading as a temptress—and, by the Prophet, a beauty, when she lets that alligator glare out of her eyes, hard to let go.

"But, mark me, Kali; who buys her pays for trouble!"
And then, turning to Ishmael, the Datu continued:

"Well done, old Saligan. For your reward, pick any of the lot you like except this little one; I'm thinking too much of

you to let you hazard your life trying to tame her."

"Thanks, mighty one," replied Ishmael with a grin; "it is your wisdom that never fails, never failed and does not fail now. It is she who, after the fight was over, gave me this stab in the shoulder that has this left arm crippled."

"Oh ho! What did I say, Kali? What did I say? No woman

can ever fool Linta."

And then, again addressing Ishmael, the Datu added, "Take

them away, son.

"Quarter them where they shall be generously fed and fattened for the next Simbaum [their Sunday market, our Friday], and send messengers to all the neighboring Chino traders and the rancherias that our next Ganta Simbaum will include a rarely sound lot of slaves.

"Luckily, we've nearly a week in which to cram their bellies

and put some tallow on their ribs."

And then, a heavy day's work, for him, finished, Datu Linta summoned the bearer of his Buyo box, refreshed himself from it's stimulating contents and withdrew to whatever of diversion or repose the temper of his harem women might permit.

The markets along the Rio Grande and its tributaries are

important sources of revenue to the Datus.

All offerers of wares, Chinos and natives alike, are taxed for

the privilege of using them.

For the more important traders, substantial market buildings are provided, like all Moro houses raised on piles seven to ten feet above the ground, well roofed with grass or the leaves of the Nipa palm, and floored with bamboo, but other-

BALBAL MASQUERADING AS A TEMPTRESS

wise open to free circulation of the air, while the vendors of the produce of the rancherias squat beneath and around them.

To these markets come all the products of gardens, plantation and jungle and the wonderful importations of the Chinos, vegetables of all sorts, in which the valley is rich; rice, coffee, gutta, beeswax, vejuca (the vines used as ropes and cordage), hemp, eggs and chickens; carabaos, wild and broke to the yoke; horses and goats; fighting chickens, with which the Moros find the most popular of their diversions and make the subject of their heaviest gambling; limes, lemons, durians, managoes, bananas and cocoa-nuts; fish of many varieties; alligators' eggs and teeth, the former as much loved for their flavor as the latter for their attraction as ornaments; nativemade weapons, pottery, mats, baskets, krises and campilans: canoes, made from superb mahogany trunks; bamboo for house and balsa (raft) construction, and the gorgeously colored and sumptuously soft silken maloongs woven in native looms; calico prints from Massachusetts; linen from Ireland; enamel and hardware from Germany; thread, needles, buttons and trinkets from England; marvellous silks, delicious teas, and the fascinating Black Poison that makes sleep come from China.

Hundreds, often some thousands, throng in to these "Sunday" markets, keen for their bargains, agog for their gossip of up and down river news of raiding and slaving, of the bickerings and the warrings of the Datus and the scandals of their harems, all fetching their doughtiest fighting chickens and madly gambling on them.

Ah! Infinite are the attractions of the Rio Grande Sim-

baums for the Moros.

And that of Ganta was among the greatest of them all.

For Linta was one of the most powerful of all the Datus, as one of the few who had not fallen victim to the use of opium, and hence maintained relative independence of the Chino traders and more masterful control over his territory than did most of his neighbors.

In his youth himself a reckless and ruthless raider, to him

had flocked in large numbers the bolder and wilder spirits from among the ranks of the more indolent and less enter-

prising Datus.

All came in whom still surged hottest the pirate blood that for centuries had made their forefathers the terror of the Eastern Seas and that ill disposed them for the peaceful pursuits of agriculture.

Locally they were known as Maratuns, or Bad Men.

But, naturally tall of mental as well of physical stature, broad of mind as of shoulders, strong of character as of hand, Datu Linta had come to realize that larger and more certain profits were to be won by peaceful agriculture than by slave hunting and trading, and most largely concentrated his own energies to that end.

This, of course, was little to the liking of the Maratuns; but since, while he no longer led them or planned and directed their raids, he never sought to restrain them otherwise than by advice, tight henchmen of his they stuck, ever ready to do

his bidding.

However heavy their raiding hands might fall on any of the

territory of other Datus, his they always respected.

And hence it was that his fat lands were heavy with crops, his Simbaums always thronged, and, what with the spoils brought by his more immediate henchmen, like Ishmael, and the offerings of the Maratuns, slaves were never lacking. Constantly, moreover, was his power extending, for any time either his own subjects or those of neighboring Datus needed a hammering, the Maratuns were ready to temporarily abandon their favorite industry of cattle, horse and carabao stealing of their own initiative for the better opportunities offered under warrant of his authority.



CHAPTER XXII

ON THE SLAVE BLOCK

The week intervening before Datu Linta's next Simbaum was altogether the most luxurious most of his Monobo captives were ever again to know.

They must be fattened to win high bidding, precisely as the beasts that are the sleekest and heaviest sell highest for the

shambles.

All rich foods they could stow in their bellies, and so convert to fat and muscle, would be certain to fetch the Datu a

higher price than if offered raw from baskets.

And hence, since heavy feeding is an occupation that irks no savage, and future anxieties dwindle with such of them as have so heavily fed, the week passed happily enough with our tree folk of Pugsan, the more for that they were free to drift about the town at will, startled here and sobered there by one or another of its wonders.

All weeks pass quickly, the happier the quickest, so to our Monobos it must have seemed no time at all before Simbaum day arrived and they were marched through the crowds that

thronged Ganta to the market place.

And a great crowd it was that had assembled.

For the three preceding days, long reaches of the Rio Grande, the Degao and their tributaries had been a-clutter with vintas, packed with bright-habited folk.

The vintas were piled with produce and merchandise and

noisy with song and jest.

No roads that lead to Derby day could beat those Moro waterways for kaleidoscopic variety and merriment.

Gaily they paddled and loudly sang.

And deafening to all and terrible to the Monobos were the salvos fired from old Tower muskets as, one by one and in groups, the *vintas* neared Ganta.

Thus by dawn of market day several hundred vintas lay

along the Degao sands, like long ranks of dozing alligators,

their crews and cargoes domiciled in the town.

And since wares must be freely exposed to stir desire for them, it was quite in the gray dawn that Saligan Ishmael assembled his captives and drove them to the market, jostled and familiarly handled along the way by intending buyers.

And once come to the market place, naturally the shrewd old Saligan had prearranged for their conspicuous exhibition in the favorite arena of the Moros, the Ganta cockpit, in whose center, where their feathered gladiators were wont to do battle, the Monobos were placed on a raised platform he had built to receive them.

Once there, all were stripped stark naked.

And into the cockpit and around them surged the populace, all aftre with curiosity to see the new lot of wild ones and many alert for bargains, the latter freely handling them from crown

For slaves, like beasts, cost money, and no buyer of the halt

or crippled may profit.

Here a Moro who needed a field hand or waterman would be testing the muscles of a man or lad, and there a Chino trader, they the canniest buyers of the lot, would be turning a girl around, pinching her breasts and looking at her teeth.

Thus the morning wearily dragged on for the dazed captives until, about 10 o'clock, it pleased Datu Linta to come, in true Moro state, to the market place, attended by the Kali, his sword, umbrella and Buyo box bearers and a picturesque if not a goodly train of his feudatory chiefs.

Arrived there and lined up in the cockpit alongside of the platform that held his offering of slaves, Linta's drums were

beaten and the throng massed closer.

The slave sale was on.

First the Kali announced that the day's offering of slaves must ever remain notable to all frequenters of the Ganta market. Surely never in the past, and probably never again, would it be their privilege to bid on such an exceptionally sound,

healthy lot.

ON THE SLAVE BLOCK

Nearly all were young, both male and female.

And then the girls!

Look at the young girls, several shortly marriageable! Especially note this daughter of the Monobo Lukus!

A wild rose!

The sweetest flower ever come to them out of the Mt. Apo jungles.

A princess of her people!

A prize to make the most miserly Datu cut the strings of his money bags and give of their contents until he had parted with her weight in pesos!

Weight? But was not her weight wonderful for a youngster? Look at her swelling arms and legs—not a river town could

boast their equal!

And her breasts, round and hard and sweet as young cocoanuts!

Ha!

If the Kali was not mistaken, here was a girl fit to make the most fascinating harem favorite in all Mindanao quite outdo

herself to hold her precedence with her lord!

As for terms, the Datu Linta would deign to accept payment for purchases either in pesos (Mexican silver dollars), in horses, carabaos or goats; in chickens, fighting or domestic, or in brass cuspidors of the acknowledged good brands.

The Kali's boost of the Datu's wares and his announcement of terms finished, one of Linta's old Saligans climbed upon

the platform, and the auction was on.

First he offered Usup.

But for his worn old carcass the bidding was anything but spirited.

Think of it! It was pathetic.

And he the most powerful of all his clansmen, the most learned sabio of his race, divinest player of the kuteebapee of all their Lukus, past master in all the mysteries and magic of their priestcraft, Dewata's very voice, through which alone He spoke to the clansmen, widely experienced alike in the magic of the Moros and the Paddies!

But here to these bargainers in human flesh, brains, knowledge did not count even the value of the exhausted betel nut they spat through their blackened teeth.

It was youth and health and strength they wanted, muscles to charm or muscles that would propel canoes and carry heavy

loads.

But that's the way of the world, of a larger world than that of the Moros, of all the world.

Sold cheap, when sold at all, ever are the old!



CHAPTER XXIII

SOLD

So little is time money among the Moros that often will they spend days dickering over the price of a chicken, and not a fighting one at that.

But obviously hopeless must prove the task of trying to turn a comparative decrepit like Usup into anything like real money.

So very shortly the auctioneer knocked him down to Butu, a rich planter and trader of Lamtag, one of Linta's villages on the lower Degao, who loosened up to a reckless bid equal

to three dollars and twenty cents!

One by one, the men and the boys were put up, the whining voice of the old auctioneer wheedling as long as chance remained of getting more, and in turn they were sold, some of the younger lads fetching handsome prices that materially increased the Datu's mixed job lot of winged, hoofed and coined assets.

Come to the women, Lancona was the first offering.

When, oh shame of shames, the wise Lancona, doubtless a shrewder doctor than any the Moros could boast, still far under forty and active as a youngster, fell cheap to Ina na Manuk, the wife of the Butu who had bought Usup.

Apittance in cuspidors she brought that totaled value scarcely

double that paid for him!

Others were put up, and on wearily the slave auction dragged; as for the women there was far keener competition, and competition was the hint to the auctioneer to tirelessly continue his alternate wheedlings of his audience and praisings of his wares.

Last of all came Esa, his piece de resistance, the prize package of the bag of slaves.

Gingerly the bidding started.

In terms of chickens, and in terms of humble egg layers at that!

And yet it had been apparent that half a dozen Chino traders, the accredited buyers of two neighboring Datus and a number of others of the richer Moros, were coveting her and certain not to let her go at any small figure.

But no bargains fall to brash bidders.

And who knows that better than those who have trained themselves to fatten off the slave markets?

Gingerly the bidding started.

But steadily it rose—from chickens to cuspidors, to beasts, and finally to money, real money, to bright, silver pesos.

And Datu Linta hugged himself with satisfaction.

Meantime the yellow men and the brown quarreled bitterly. Each claimed to be the namer of each step of advance in the bidding.

And the auctioneer shrewdly settled all disputes by recognizing as the real raiser of a bid one most likely to remember and compensate the service when the sale was finished.

Nor was bidding limited to the men.

Ina na Manuk, wife of Butu, a lady not only of quality but of rare distinction throughout southern Mindanao, as will shortly appear, showed signs of having entered the competition to stay, certainly for a tight finish with the best of them, perhaps to a win.

Indeed, her eagerness seemed to be bordering so close on recklessness, that at length Butu drew near and whispered:

"But Ina, in the name of the Prophet, what can you be thinking of?

"You're as crazy as a wounded carabao hunting it's hunter. "We can't afford to bid against the agents of the Datus and those Chinos, for they reach better markets than can we.

"You've already bid her past any price at which we could

hope to profit."

"Oh, have I," Ina na Manuk answered, "Well, if I've got to

go farther to get her, I've only just started.

"That's a rare one, and no matter what I pay for her, she shall bring us more profit than you make in a six month off your tienda.

"Before I'm done with her, I'll make our Datu, the great Linta himself, want her so badly that he shall pay me several

times any price I now pay him."

Still, Ina knew her way about auctions, as about most other forms of trafficking, and was always careful not to press the pace needlessly, bidding seldom, only when the last bid hung uncontested dangerously long.

Slower grew the bidding and longer the auctioneer's wheedles. One and another dropped out, as their respective limits were reached and passed, until finally only Ina and a Chino trader

remained in the running.

The Chino's yellow cheeks were paled to gray putty hue of the excitement of the contest.

At length he mustered nerve to raise Ina's last bid to ninety

pesos.

Ina, confident her time was come, instantly countered with a level hundred, plus Lanang, her favorite fighting chicken, the champion winged gladiator of all the Moro cockpits, victor over all the doughtiest ever brought against him, envied of all and previously held priceless by Ina na Manuk herself.

At this the Chino turned away, angrily emitting a string of heathen oaths that, fortunately, none of the faithful understood.

Esa was sold.

And as Butu and Ina na Manuk led away their three purchases, Esa, Lancona and Usup, certain it was that every last Moro of the throng was firmly convinced that poor Butu had a crazy wife on his hands.

For could not Lanang be relied on to earn for the Datu more than the cost of the two fairest favorites of his harem!

Still, Ina was a lady so notable for knowing her way about that the Kali was prompted to whisper to Datu Linta:

"By the Prophet, O mighty one, either Ina na Manuk is bewitched by *Balbal* or else, which I'm fearing is far more likely, something has taken the fight out of Lanang.

And yet he was wrong, was the wise Kali.

In both respects.
He, along with all the others, had simply underweighed Ina na Manuk's faith in her judgment and her insatiable proclivity for gambling!



CHAPTER XXIV

TONY TRIGG

The Commanding General made no mistake in his faith in Morine. No more was he gone than the new Governor began sending out spies, chiefly one sort of trader or another. He must know the doings among the Datus, for, friendly as most of them were to him, there were few whose word he could trust. And all were such past masters in dissimulation that everything they told him must be checked.

Shortly his agents brought him word that Linta and Telecoco were busy making powder and strengthening their forts.

But it was no surprise to him when, shortly thereafter, these two worthies appeared in state at his headquarters with warmest protestations of friendship, and calling him *Lusud-Satyan*, brother of the same belly.

Then, seated on their mats before him, mouths charged with betel-nut and cuspidors handy, the mental fence began, on their part chiefly designed to learn his purposes and what he knew of happenings at their rancherias.

But notwithstanding there lay on his table full plans of the forts they were strengthening and memoranda of the men and arms each had available to hold them, Morine received them with every show of friendship and confidence. And to them he talked frankly.

Their authority and religion? Both should be respected. But they must maintain peace and order in their respective districts, stop all marauding, even against the hill tribes.

Their slaves and wives? Well, the 'Mergans deplored both practices, but, since they were a part of the Moro religion, would not interfere with them.

Taxes? Oh, the 'Mergans were rich and had no need to squeeze the people. Perhaps there may be some small levies to improve the health of the Datus' own towns and build

schools, but none they need worry about, and all funds so

raised would be spent for their benefit.

The schools? Ah, he should explain that it was the custom of the 'Mergans to educate all their people, to teach them to read and write, so that their knowledge may be extended by study.

But the slaves, the Datus interrupted; surely it was not

proposed to teach slaves?

Ah, yes; the 'Mergans made no exception. All would be expected to go to the schools, children of the Chinos and of slaves as well as those of the Moros and their Datus and Kalis.

And right here, by the suspicious glances they exchanged, the shrewd Governor realized that he confronted a check, at the very outset, of the one single step he contemplated toward their uplift and ultimate control.

They doubted his motives.

Either he was planning to seduce their children away from the religion of their fathers or else, and that seemed to them a certainty, he was scheming through his schools to implant

in their slaves the seed of revolt!

But of his knowledge of the line of their reasoning the Governor gave no hint. Too well he knew that argument with them would be useless. They must be disciplined a bit, and humbled. Then the going with them would be—perhaps not easy, but certainly less hard.

So ultimately the conference ended with mutual protestations of the warmest friendship, notwithstanding the Datus were fully resolved to fight his school scheme to a finish and Morine's mind was made up to give them a sound drubbing

just as soon as he could conveniently arrange it.

And then the Datus took to their vintas and were soon lost

in the pearly haze that shrouds tropical rivers and fields.

That night, Morine sat late in conference with the captain commanding the Cotabato Constabulary, occupied with plans unlikely to pleasure either Telecoco or Linta.

An abler aide or fitter mate the Governor could scarcely

have had.

TONY TRIGG

Indeed, they were much of the same kidney, in many re-

spects.

The main difference between them was that Constabulary Captain Tony Trigg was always perfectly content to take his world as he found it, so long as there was enough doing to keep his guns from rusting.

Degenerate or regenerate, any old neck of the world's woods was good enough for him that offered plenty of opportunities

to put up a man's fight.

By preference, Captain Tony opened all arguments with

powder and finished them with steel.

Few of the pearls of his wisdom were ever in evidence, except such as issued from the muzzle of his .45 when he thought they were needed.

And yet it would be an error to assume that Captain Trigg

was bloodthirsty.

Nothing of the sort.

No such auburn-curled, laughing-eyed, rollicky stalwart as he could belong in such reprehensible category.

It was simply that—well, where there needs must be fight-

ing, he just loved to get into it, that was all.

And of fighting he had certainly seen a lot, for a youngster of little more than thirty, under several flags, and some, his

mates had gotten hints, perhaps under no flag at all.

Which was about all his closest intimates knew of him. But what mattered where one had for mate such a glutton for hardships and hazards, to whom the toughest campaigning and most desperate battling were the frolics he best loved! Especially when no worn friend of his could stumble under any burden Trigg could contrive to shift to his own shoulders, the heavier the burden the gayer his jests!

When, after few interruptions from Captain Tony, the Governor had finished detailing his plan for the surprise of the Datus, for some time the former sat silent, smiling and slowly

nodding his curly head. Finally, the Governor asked:

"Well, Captain?"

"Why, d--n it, Morine—pardon, sir, I mean Governor, I—"

"Oh, hell! Tony, cut out the official frills when we're by ourselves," Morine broke in.

"Sure, if you say so, Joe. Why, I was about to remark that

you're a Christmas present to me."
"How so? What do you mean?"

"I mean as a K. O.; as a commanding officer you're a rosy peach. Sure to be something doing for Tony right along. Never hoped for any such luck. Thought the General would plunk into this billet some lazy, rummy pot that needs an I. C. branded on his rump and orders to right-about out of the service."

Instantly Morine's eyes hardened in a way that drove the

smile from Trigg's face, and he slowly remarked:

"Don't you be too d---d sure, Tony. If left to my way, there'll

be little fighting in this Province."

"No fighting, man! Why, it's the only diet Moro stomachs can digest, is fighting. They're hungry for it, and it's up to us to feed 'em what they want, ain't it?"

And when Morine's only answer was a grave shake of the

head, Trigg persisted:

"But why little fighting?"

"Why?" Morine replied, in almost a whisper; "why, Tony? Because fighting Moros is little short of murder. To be sure they're superb battlers; got to kill 'em to stop 'em."

"But how murder then, man?"

"That's just the trouble, Tony; they've got the nerve to make them a terrible enemy against the best troops in the world, but they lack the arms. Of what avail their krises and campilan blades against our Springfields and machine guns? None, only they don't know it, at least won't know it to start with, and after they've learned won't care. That's the hell of it! Shooting down brave men like that is no fit work for you or me, Tony."

"By God, but you're right. Never thought of it just that

way before."

"Sure, I'm right. Of course an officer untrained to bush fighting can easily get his entire command slit to ribbons by these

TONY TRIGG

beauties; but, bar a few slashes now and then from one of their mad rushes out of ambush, for the command of an officer with the experience you or I have had, they're easy as

grouse, no?"

"It would sure be our own fault if our men ever got cut up much. Only I'm thinking most of the boys would take grouse for preference—or Zulus, or even Japs. A mad Moro swinging a flamy kris or a great two-handed meat axe of a campilan is a little the unprettiest thing in the way of two-legged game I know of. For you never can tell when they won't get to you, and once come hand to hand you'll admit all the advantage is theirs. That's what makes me love'em."

"Yes, yes, Tony; hand to hand, they've the best of it, and I'll admit they're the grandest stalking on earth; don't dare drop your guard a second when out among hostile Moros, but—good God, what show have they against us? None, just

none, Tony."

"What's your game, then?"

"Jolt a few of them and see if I can't bluff them into doing our policing and battling for us."

"Well, I'll be d---d! That sounds like a long gamble. And

their slavery and bunches of wives?"

"Blink all that and see if we can't get an under hold on them through our schools."

And when, shortly, Capt. Trigg was stumbling through the

darkness to his quarters, he growled:

"Well, Tony, you're 'going! going! gone!"—to a d---d school-master! Sold; just d---d well sold!"





CHAPTER XXV

SLAVE TO MOTHER OF CHICKENS

Esa, Lancona and Usup were most fortunate in the master and mistress to whom they passed from Datu Linta's slave block.

Butu and Ina na Manuk were among the most enlightened and humane of all the Moros.

This statement may sound paradoxical when we have to admit that they were two of the most conspicuous devotees of cock fighting in all Mindanao.

Still it is true.

Yet Ina na Manuk was so madly addicted to the sport and such a reckless gambler at it that Butu, rich as he was of his farming and trading, was never free from anxiety she might not one day reduce the family to poverty, and was ever pleading with her to use more of the same prudence he did in staking against strange winged champions.

But to no purpose.

The love of the game and indulgence in its excitement was ingrained into her from childhood.

She was daughter of a Sultan and Pundita whose territory included a goodly area of the fertile shores of Lake Gusan.

Her father and mother were passionately fond of cock fighting.

And she herself was yet a child when christened from nothing less than the mad devotion for the game she early manifested.

Thus it happened that, while by custom no Moro father or mother bears other name than that of their first-born, as "Ana na John," Father of John, or "Ina na John," Mother of John, throughout her life Butu's wife continued to wear the name given her in childhood, Ina na Manuk—Mother of Chickens!

Worthy daughter of her learned father, the Sultan and Pun-

dita of Lake Gusan, Ina was one of the very few Moro women of broad education.

So learned was she in the Koran that she could expound it

with the wisest Punditas of them all.

Thus she exercised great influence without as well as within her own household, the more for that by disposition as well as by training she was deeply religious and an ardent propagandist of the Prophet.

Naturally, with such a woman, her household held no rivals. Butu, whatever his inclination, must content himself with

what she could give him.

Thus, when our tree-top friends were brought among them, the family was limited to the good pair of them, their seven children, a few pagan slaves—and their chickens.

And there, due chiefly to Esa's clever diplomacy the bond-

age of the three was of the lightest and gentlest.

Lancona was employed in simple domestic tasks, Usup in voyaging with Butu on trading expeditions in his vinta or pottering at easy jobs around his tienda.

As for Esa, from the first Ina na Manuk had taken a great

fancy to her.

This led her to do even more for Esa than was necessary to the carrying out of the plans to profit by her that she, a quick opportunist, had formed at first glimpse of her on the Ganta slave block.

Perceiving her to possess rare intelligence for a pagan, rare, indeed, among the Moro girls, the attachment she formed for her soon was followed by an ardent desire to convert her to the faith of Islam.

Hence it was she kept Esa constantly by her side and treated her more as daughter than as slave.

Nor had Usup's lessons been in vain.

Out of much teaching always must come wisdom, so the

pupil is not a hopeless dullard.

And the eager mind of Esa had missed nothing she was able to retain out of the mountains of knowledge through which Usup had led her.

SLAVE TO MOTHER OF CHICKENS

And happily for her she had not forgotten his hint of how much easier his life had become among the Paddies after he had been successful in misleading them into conviction that they had him converted to their faith.

Then, besides, her week in Ganta, while waiting to be offered in Linta's Simbaum, had brought her some new object les-

sons.

It had given her time to form the wise conclusion that, bitterly as she resented her captivity, and wildly as she longed to regain her liberty among the nodding tree tops that line the Malbul, nevertheless she must be patient and study her masters before she could hope to outwit them.

Thus would she make her days easier in the land of her captivity and the sooner prepare herself to regain the freedom

she loved.

So to Ina na Manuk's great delight she found her not only a

willing but an eager pupil.

But when, early in her captivity at Lamtag, Ina said to her: "Ah, you shrewd little unbeliever, you must be converted to the true faith; do you not desire it?" Esa feigned ignorance and innocently answered:

"But, wise one, Dewata well suffices us. To us our faith in him is true. But would you that I should change it for yours?"

"Would I, child?" answered Ina; "I would that all should own our Allab.

"Allah alone is great.

"He alone is all sufficing.

"He alone can give light in darkness, He alone give rest in

pain, He alone can admit us to life everlasting.

"Listen, girl, listen," and her tones grew eager; "accept Him and heed me and I will make you great and powerful, even as I am.

"I will teach you my learning, pass you the mantle of my wisdom, make you one day as supreme in some Datu's household, be his harem favorites what they may, as I am in Butu's."

"It is well, wise one, it shall be as you say," Esa replied; "you shall not find me unheedful," but adding under her

breath, "until my wings are strong and I can fly as I like!" Day by day her training proceeded, but less trying, more varied than the droning lectures of Usup, with whom there was nothing to do but just to listen.

With Ina, on the contrary, there were no end of things to do,

most puzzling but all interesting.

First, there was the learning to read and to write, the magic by which the Moros cover white sheets with marks that look like the sand where many chickens have fed, by which they convey messages and preserve their laws and history.

Ah, but that was hard work, learning to read and write, shut in the house, bent over the puzzling sheets, trying to remember and copy the weird marks thickly sown over them.

But to Esa, this was their greatest magic.

Only those who practiced it were the powerful of the land,

so to it she stuck patiently.

And once tolerably adept at reading, then came the Koran, that endless Koran, and its interminable passages she must memorize—and the prayers she must learn to chant.



CHAPTER XXVI

THE COMING OF THE 'MERGANS

Little by little, day by day, month by month, Esa's education by Ina na Manuk proceeded, even to the picking up of much Spanish from her father and the Chinos. Her progress was rapid, so rapid that Ina na Manuk never regretted having parted with Lanang to get her.

Indeed, she became perhaps more fond of her than of any of

her own children.

But while herself become, outwardly, a Moro in appearance and practice, conforming to Moro customs and scrupulously observing all the precepts of Islam as religiously as the most devout of her captors, Esa yet loved none but her Monobo people and feared none but their gods.

Yet all this she was as careful to conceal as that deep in her

heart blazed anything but fondness even for Ina.

Of Ina she was always gently tolerant, however, for she appreciated her kindness and valued the wisdom taught her and was hungry for more.

But Moro character and practice did not appeal to her as anything but inferior, in all respects, to that of the Monobos.

And in this view she was doubtless strengthened by Lancona and Usup, both of whom were kept occupied at their tasks and never admitted to any of the advantages she enjoyed.

Of her father she was very fond, and with him passed all her

spare time when he was not voyaging with Butu.

As for Usup, while very proud of her, especially of her acquired ability to read and write, to him the highest form of magic, never did he tire trilling the dearly loved *kuteehapee* they had managed to retain and keeping alive in her mind the Monobo lore and mysteries.

Great was she as a Moro girl, greater than any of their very

own, but her best destiny lay with her clan.

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That Esa must never forget.

Punungan was dead.

Tugan was young and untried.

Was not the chieftainship of the clan hers for the asking? But much less than all his time did she now permit him to so occupy.

For her keen, questing mind was always greedy of news of the many markets Usup visited, of their doings and gossip,

with which he returned loaded.

Especially now, for a new enemy was abroad in the land and the talk of the river from the mountains to the sea, the terrible 'Mergans!

A race of blue-eyed, blond giants, they were said to be, who

dwarfed even the lustiest Paddies.

Already they had invaded the northern coast of the island. Before the superior valor and arms of the 'Mergans, the warriors of the Paddies were powerless as are the trees to withstand the tempest.

Of these 'Mergans little Esa was yet to see more and learn much, but, of course, she had no inkling of the bliss and trag-

edy their coming was yet to bring into her life.

Of the 'Mergans one evening Usup told her. "Child, these 'Mergans must have more wonderful magic than the Moros

or the Paddies, but what it is no one yet knows.

"Among the Moros they come in big, armed bodies, carrying smoking weapons that kill as far as one can see, but they hurt no one, take nothing. They ask many, many questions about the people, their arms and their products, and are always writing in their books. Any chickens, rice or other food they want, they take, but they pay for it in red cloth, beads, brassware, or looking glasses."

"But have you seen nothing of their magic, father, or had

hint of what it is like?"

"No, not a word; but the Chinos say that people like them came to their country nearly forty years ago with smooth words and big promises of opening their country to trade and improve their condition.

THE COMING OF THE 'MERGANS

"But the people like the 'Mergans who so came among the Chinos had deceit in their hearts and lies on their tongues, for they brought the Chinos the Black Poison that makes sleep come, which they call opium; and when, in fear of it, the Chinos refused to accept it, then the white men made war on them and killed so many of their people that finally they had to accept it."

"Ah," said Esa, "but that Black Poison itself is wonderful magic. The Chino traders who sell it to the Datus get rich very fast. The Datus are so crazy for it, they pay any price the Chinos ask, in carabaos, gutta, women or other slaves. Surely these 'Mergans must bring the same magic or some-

thing more powerful."

"Well, that is more than I know, but I hear that never do white men come into the country of black or yellow men ex-

cept to rob them of their lands and their labor."

During his travels, Usup had met and become much cultivated by an old Chino trader named Wa-Tu, one of the richest and wisest of his people in the island.

Wa-Tu had been one of the keenest competitors for the pur-

chase of Esa at the Ganta market.

And the sly old Chino had no more lost interest in the girl than he had been slow to realize the information of trade opportunities in the interior to be gained from Usup.

To be sure, Wa-Tu was sixty, and sported a spare wife for not a few of his years, but still not so many he could not well

afford more.

But while Wa-Tu was wise in the doings and ways of the world, his brother and inseparable, Go-Peng, far surpassed him, for Go-Peng was a scholar who had travelled widely and made himself a close student of the history and customs of all races. By the Moros his advice on both domestic and foreign politics was highly valued and often sought by the Datus, and far better would it have been for them if they had more closely followed it.





CHAPTER XXVII

CHINO PHILOSOPHY

Frequent were the visits of Wa-Tu and Go-Peng at Butu's village since Esa's coming, on any pretext, or on no pretext at all, and longer grew their stays.

But one day they arrived on a very definite and important mission, no less than a summons to a conference there with the leading Datus of the Rio Grande valley.

The Datus were worried and puzzled.

Their policy toward those terrible 'Mergans must be determined.

How could they resist a people who had swept the colossal smoking war boats of the Paddies from the seas, captured Manila and dominated Luzon?

Already had they established themselves at Cagyan, at Zamboanga and Cotabato.

To be sure, unresisted, they were pacific, but still their purpose in coming had not developed.

Could it be anything less than hostile in one way or another to Datu dominion?

Could it be long before they were seeking to squeeze them greedily as had the Paddies?

All this they must learn and determine how to treat, for plainly the 'Mergans would prove infinitely harder to deal with than were the Paddies.

And it was in this dilemma they had summoned Go-Peng.

Thus it was a large gathering of the lords of the land that squatted on their mats in Butu's council room, gaily be-turbaned, richly be-krised, all keyed to their keenest by extra heavy use of the stimulating contents of their Buyo boxes, to listen to wise old Go-Peng.

After much rambling discourse among themselves, from which it appeared the opinion was general that the 'Mergans

could only be come as came the Spaniards, to subjugate and tax them, Datu Linta asked Go-Peng:

"But, tell us, Go-Peng, are not these 'Mergans of the same white race that you have told us forced upon your people the

Black Poison and tried to steal your country?"

"No," answered Go-Peng; "they are a different people, have different laws and are in all ways far superior to the European whites who ruthlessly wronged China.

"In nothing is the government of those Europeans materi-

ally different from your own.

"There, as here, there are three classes:

"The ruling class that corresponds to your Sultans, Rajas and Datus.

"The trading, commercial and land owning class their chiefs are forced to tolerate as the bulwark of their system, these

both of very limited numbers.

"And last the poor, that make up the vast majority of their subjects, whose privileges so nearly begin and end with the right to live and to exhaust their energies for the enrichment of their masters that they are a little better off than are your Monobo slaves.

"As for their middle class, its richer traders and traffickers furnish money and leaders for their rulers' wars, precisely as do the more prosperous of your planters, and with one sort of spoils or another they are kept playing their masters' game just as you share the loot of their raids with your henchmen whose blood has won it."

"But do not their middle and low class know rest and diversion between their wars and after harvests are made, as do

ours?" Datu Mambutu interrupted.

"Diversion, yes, in a measure; but never do those Europeans know rest, never are they free of the weight of the yoke."

"Why?"

"First, because their wars are so frequent or the dread that new wars will break out is so great, that all but the older subjects of each government are kept constantly trained in war-

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fare and organized into vast armies, ready at a moment's

notice to take the field against their enemies.

"Thus all Europe is a string of vast armed camps, in which millions of men are serving, largely withdrawn from every type of productive labor, all at such frightful cost that each of the European governments is staggering under burdens of debt that run into more millions than there are alligators in the Rio Grande."

"But have they no wealth, no property, those rulers or gov-

ernments?" queried Linta.

"Not a *centavo*," Go-Peng answered, "except what they squeeze in taxes from the trading, trafficking, farming and laboring classes.

"The wretched masses must pay for the privilege of being misgoverned by the ruling class that fattens and grows rich

at their expense.

"And it is because the masses are kept drained dry to the near border of revolt that the vast mountains of debt of which I have told you have been piled up."

"But tell me, Sabio," Butu asked, "who will lend to such mad improvidents? Who is crazy enough to trust them?"

"Their own deluded subjects, to be sure, in whom has been ingrained the illusion that the obligations of their rulers and their governments are sacred, as sacred as is their own duty to sweat for them.

"Thus, through loans, enormous sums of the gains of the masses not absorbed by taxation are drained into administrative coffers, to be squandered in mad administrative ex-

travagances.

"And this notwithstanding every last one of those European governments is, technically, and actually, a bankrupt, in the sense and to the extent that they are unable to liquidate their maturing debts out of their own available resources, and only escape the disgrace of downright default to their creditors by new borrowings that year by year pile higher the loads of debt that one day must crush them to ruin and plunge them into unthinkable chaos."

And then, after sitting for a time silent, apparently absorbed in the terrible picture he had drawn, Go-Peng resumed:

"The second reason they know no rest is that their life is

even far more complex than is ours in China.

"Those white races of Europe are by nature self-indulgent, great lovers of luxury, always ready to pay dear for anything

new that can add to their comfort or pleasure.

"And since many of their middle and lower classes are possessed of extraordinary ingenuity in devising new things to please and tempt, their land is covered everywhere with great workshops where labor never ceases night or day, and where their workers in metals and fabrics produce such miracles of beauty or convenience that there is no end to the demand for them.

"Were they content to live more as we do, limiting their labor to the production of such food, shelter and clothing as ordinary comfort demands, their problems would be simple

as are ours.

"But all that makes for increase in the complexity of their lives they boast as an advance in civilization; a misconception they take pride in, notwithstanding, obviously, every step of such advance only enslaves them to new wants and condemns them to new and harder labor, or bows them down under new disappointments.

"Civilization, according to the white man's conception and practice of it, Datus, is day by day welding chains of actual slavery tighter and tighter upon the white race, from

the highest to the lowest.

"And it is a slavery beside which that of your pagans is benign, that worst bondage of all any creature may suffer, slavery to one's own unsatisfied wants, exclusion from the ranks of those who have what he has not.

"Better a sweating pagan staggering under a heavy load than a 'free' white man taught to contract tastes and desires

he lacks ability to gratify."

"But, Sabio, all who owe one day must pay—are made to whether they want to or not," broke in Datu Telecoco, the

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feared, who, they say, can talk to alligators and slip around of nights silently as a vampire and suck the blood of his enemies, "what is the magic of those white rulers, and how long can they go on doing that beautiful double squeeze of their people, first taxing them and then borrowing from them?

"I'd like to know that magic, me."

"How long, Datu?" replied the bold old Chino.

"It can and will go on until the last of the class you Datus typify have perished or been stripped of the myth of superiority over their fellows that has lent them authority and privilege to have their will of their people.

"It must go on until all the lords of the earth are commoners and all commoners are broadly privileged as now are

lords."

"Pay?"

"Yes, one day they must pay, must those governments; but only can they be made to pay by forcing them to make way for a new type of government that shall be truly representa-

tive of all the people.

"And then generations of clean, honest, economic administration must ensue, through which the now idle armed hosts are profitably employed in the ranks of labor, before national resources can be husbanded and ability to begin paying their creditors can be attained."

"Well, I'm as glad they don't owe me anything as I'm sorry I don't understand their borrowing magic," commented Telecoco; "but tell us, Sabio, in what are the 'Mergans different

from the white people you have described."

"Most notably are they different, Datu, in that among the 'Mergans all are equal and include no ruling class claiming authority by Divine right.

"In theory, and largely in practice, their laws are made by

and for the common good of all the people.

"But true it is that their government has not yet become truly representative of all the people.

"The governing class have so molded the laws and adminis-

tered them as to create a ruling class even mightier than are any who have occupied European thrones—Lords by Money Might, who are more powerful than any of the Lords by Divine Right."



CHAPTER XXVIII

BETTER OFF A MORO THAN A 'MERGAN SLAVE

"Then they are rich, those 'Mergan Datus, and have many people, have they not?" asked Mambutu of Go-Peng.

"Many people? What do you mean?"
"Why, many Monobo slaves, of course."

"No, Moros; the 'Mergans have no slaves, in the sense that your Monobos are yours, whose bodies you may exhaust or whose lives take at your will.

"All, under the theory of their laws, are free and equal, re-

member.

"The lowest born may be elevated to the highest post in the land, so he has the worth and strength to win it.

"Among them none may own property in human flesh; no

son of man may be bought and sold.

"But while Freedom opens the door of opportunity to the 'Mergan masses, comparatively few ever get far within the threshold.

"Here you Moro Datus must buy the men and women you need to do your labor.

"They cost you money.

"They become property, a part of your wealth.

"Kill them or needlessly exhaust or starve them, and you are deliberately robbing yourselves.

"None but fools do that.

"The fatter you keep them the longer they live, the more they profit you.

"The labor the 'Mergan Datus need, they may not buy.

"The men and women and children they want, they hire, on

wage.

"Their health, their lives, matter nothing to the 'Mergan Datus, for they have cost nothing, are not property. As fast as they are worn out or die, others may be hired.

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"Hence the 'Mergan Datus profit most who hire cheapest

and work hardest the men and women they need."

"Father of Alligators! What a grand system!" enthusiastically broke in Datu Telecoco, "Free! You call those 'Mergan Monobos free, Sabio? Why, they're tighter bound slaves than our Monobos!

"And think of it; brethren; they cost nothing, don't have to be fed, and you can blister their hands or break their backs without

loss of a centavo!"

"True, Datu, the 'Mergan Monobos are indeed slaves, in many respects of more pitiable condition than are yours,"

answered Go-Peng.

"Indeed, in yet another sense are they slaves, as victims of the theory of Freedom and Equality upon which their government is founded.

"The 'Mergans are a mixed race, made up of all the peoples

of the world.

"To them have flocked the lowly and downtrodden burdenbearers of all lands, eager for share of their free opportunities.

"And there each, according to his ability, may earn twice or thrice as much—and often far more—than in the land of his birth.

"But soon, his imagination awakened and his wants increased by education, his perspective lengthened, the resulting pride of the Freedom that gives him Equality with the greatest of the land of his adoption, is transmuted into nothing less than a bitter curse that leaves him self-shackled in a bondage few of his type ever escape, a bondage that galls and sweats him to an extent your Monobo slaves never know.

"Equal to, good as any man!

"How can he obviously demonstrate it?

"How, save by living the pace of the grade next above him, by decking his woman and children gaily as those of that grade deck theirs, by housing himself and indulging in luxuries as do they?

"Thus, to realize in his own case and from his own point of

BETTER OFF A MORO THAN A 'MERGAN SLAVE

view the 'Mergan theory of Equality, he condemns himself to treadmill drudgery that never ceases until his death.

"For struggle and prosper as he may, increase his yearly gains all he can, always above and beyond him is yet another

grade that keeps him wearily, stubbornly plodding."

"What a queer people!" interposed Datu Linta; "I don't see how they are materially better than are the whites who forced the Black Poison on your people."

"Ah, but they are, Datu.

"The theory of their government is better, the best ever devised.

"And now they are steadily improving its practice.

"Nearer are they approaching a truly broad representative government and rapidly limiting the power of the privileged

classes which have been exploiting the masses.

"Already many of their provinces have given their women equal rights and privileges with their men, and soon, it appears, women will have free voice in all affairs, public and private, throughout their land."

"Father of Alligators! What do you think of that?" Telecoco blurted. "They are crazy, mad as a bee-stung carabao, are those 'Mergans. What do their lords figure will happen to

their harems?

"Why, Sabio, their harems will be unlivable.

"Free voice indeed!

"Women's tongues and conduct ever are too free, even where, as among us, one can make his Kali condemn them to be buried to the shoulders in the sand or to be tied to an ant-covered palosanto.

"May Balbal seize them if they try to bring such madness

here!"

"But, Datu, the 'Mergans have no harems, at least in your sense.

"Their laws limit them to one wife, and any not so satisfied must forage abroad and eat his fruit where he finds it.

"To be sure, the foragers are many.

"And according to my observation when in their country,

their practices in this respect have served to make the condition of thousands and thousands of their women far more deplorable than is that of the women of lands where polyg-

amy is practiced."

"By my father's beard, but it is high time we are learning their motives in invading our country," said Linta. "First, I suppose, they are prompted by loot, for such a people must be great raiders among themselves, are they not?"

"No, Datu," Go-Peng answered, "never do they raid their

neighbors.

"Wars they have had, but only to establish and maintain

their own freedom or that of others.

"Once only have they warred among themselves, over the practice of one section of their provinces of enslaving black men, and as a result property in human flesh has been abol-

ished from their land.

"In their wars with others they have been invincible, chiefly for that the soldiers of their enemies have been principally landless hirelings of their rulers, with small color of stake in the game they were forced into, while the 'Mergan troops were free-holders battling for their homes or to help others to the freedom they enjoy."

"To help others! Well that's about enough of your 'Mergans," growled Telecoco; "personally, I get all the battling on my own account I need, without messing with the troubles of others. But brethren, is it not time to eat and sleep?"

A suggestion so generally popular that the conference ad-

journed, to meet again in mid-afternoon.

As the company slowly filed out, Esa arose from a corner where she had been feigning sleep, but eagerly following all that was said, as well as she could, and sighed:

"Well, better a Mt. Apo than a 'Mergan Monobo."

And then she summoned some of the meaner slaves to remove the circle of cuspidors which in the excitement of the strange happenings they had been listening to the betelchewing Datus had been patronizing more liberally than usual.



CHAPTER XXIX

THE GIRL OF HIS DREAMS

Neither in her infrequent letters to her mother, nor in her intimacy with the Morines, nor even to Captain Tony Trigg, had Ruth Snell communicated any hint of the bitterness of her disillusions and disappointments.

Far too much of the stubborn self-sufficiency of her father,

James Snell, had she for that.

His iron will had not been sufficient to daunt her and force her into marriage with the human zero whose one and only recommendation—admitted by her father—was the large numeral in front of the long string of ciphers that represented his fortune.

On this subject their two wills had clashed, and his had not

triumphed.

Her resolution was formed.

He might disinherit her—and had.

Remained only to carry out her resolution, and to the carrying of it out she had proceeded with a promptness and method that doubtless the old task-master was still secretly admiring. Only he'd die before he'd ever admit it.

Nor from the first plan to do for herself that had come into

her head had she varied a hair.

To her mother she had said, "I'll teach. I'll go to the wilderness, to any wilderness, say to the Philippines and teach my

naked sister of the jungle."

Hence, of course, to the Philippines she had come—and Destiny, working through the Chief of the Bureau of Education at Manila, had assigned her to the Moro Provinces, with station at Cotabato.

Months before, when a government transport, making a round of the southern garrisons to effect a change of troops, had brought her there, she had found the wife of Joseph Morine the only white woman in the town.

Indeed, Mrs. Morine was the only white woman in all southern Mindanao.

And when Mrs. Morine's health made it necessary for her to take the very next boat north, for a change of climate, Ruth Snell, by right of seniority, succeeded to her lonely distinction.

But while she had learned to highly esteem Mrs. Morine, the loss of her had not in the least discomposed or saddened Ruth.

Why should it?

Everything in this world has its compensations.

Strangers to love and warm friendship are spared the pangs of partings.

Dwellers within themselves know no suffering from lack of

companionship.

And resolution having brought her there, it was also resolution—more even than Tony Trigg—that was keeping her in Cotabato.

But, oh! the sad jolts her ideals had received. She had intended to accomplish so much. That was the essential element of her resolution, to work and to do. And work that shows no progress soon becomes a horror.

She had not come there as come the other Insular teachers. Not at least in any respect save in her hopeless ignorance of

Spanish or any of the native tongues.

Of the rank and file of the others, some take their task seriously enough, but with very definite side considerations.

Some see in an Insular teachership a chance for a rattling fine honeymoon; a few start warm with the untried zeal of young missionaries; not a few have hid up their sleeves neat little contracts for news letters to their home newspapers—and the rest are grateful for a chance to see the world at the expense of Uncle Sam and to idle and fatten at his generous crib.

But Ruth came just to work, to accomplish something, and such as she like to see results, want results so badly that they are distressed when they don't appear.

THE GIRL OF HIS DREAMS

That is what was hurting Ruth.

She was big mentally, trained intellectually to a finish, graduated in the first five of her college class, fitted and ambitious to win distinction in her chosen vocation.

And now, after many months of persistent, patient toil, she

realized she lacked—fit material to work on!

Fit! It was utterly impossible, altogether too raw for her

measure of preparation.

The job lot of castes, half-castes and no castes, a few of them, at least, might attain the distinction of becoming the progenitors of great-great grandchildren capable of receiving something of the rudimentary elements of a higher education.

But that was all.

Ruth knew it—as anybody with a head screwed on straight

who studies the question is bound to learn and admit.

And it was somber thought along this line that had been preoccupying her that afternoon when the Governor strolled

in for a cup of tea and a chin-chin.

Many, indeed, were the long chin-chins the two had. Nevertheless, their interest in each other was so obviously purely intellectual that Captain Tony Trigg was not worrying about it, much less feeling it necessary to take any exception to it.

Her keen mind and serious interest in all the larger Insular problems was both an inspiration and a rest to Morine, a rest from the routine of office minutiæ and the petty shop talk of

the mess.

His broad knowledge of the world, his intimate experience and close observation of social and political conditions in many lands, and his shrewd, and often startling and altogether original but always profoundly earnest conversation, absorbed her. To her, it was a post graduate course in social and political science by one who seldom minced words and who never balked at free expressions of the prejudices deeply rooted in his Irish blood.

After telling Ruth good evening, Morine dropped into a long

lounge chair and cheerily asked:

"Well, Miss Snell, how's the school coming on? Going to

have the little brown brothers of the Islands fit for representative government shortly? You know a big section of the home public and press are clamoring for our retirement from the Islands and leaving their people to stew in their own political broth."

"Of course I'm aware of the clamor at home, but certainly you are jesting with me, Governor. Fit these people for representative government! Fit them to be turned loose to run

themselves!

"Yes, it's natural the people at home should expect that of us, we've gotten on so fast fitting the American Indians for representative government and admitting them to participation in it, haven't we? Let me see, I believe it was only a small matter of three hundred odd years ago that we started in on them with bullets and Bibles, a scant hundred since we began serious attempt at their education, and yet how amazingly rapid has been our progress! So rapid that perhaps in another half century they may be regarded as eligible for citizenship."

"Quite so," concurred the Australian. "And there your problem was so much more difficult than is ours here. In America you were soon very, very many to the Indians' one, while here we have seven million natives of all sorts, none superior to and few the equal mentally of the North American Indian,

to a few hundred of us!"

And since Ruth sat silent, presently Morine added, "Here Tony's the bullet and you the Bible bearer of this Moro province, and possibly the eighth generation of your descendants may see the progeny of your present charges become creditable citizens of a government of their own."

Whereupon Ruth blushed slightly and manifested a measure of discomposure very unusual for her, for Morine's last observation had conveyed an implication he was far from in-

tending.

For the truth is that she and Tony had become engaged, and the fact had been locally announced by them several weeks before.

THE GIRL OF HIS DREAMS

At the time of her arrival, Tony had seen no white girl for three years. The dignity and calm beauty of Ruth's face made her to him a fascinating vision from another world, the home world.

The splendid wealth of her golden hair had for him, so to speak, cloaked the pathetic poverty of her figure and clothed her in loveliness.

Ha! she had materialized. Here had come to him the girl of his dreams through many a steaming jungle night when no sounds broke the silence save the hum of insects, the plaintive squeak of carabao and the bark of deer.

Thrall to her from the moment of their first meeting, the great, gentle, rollicking, reckless bush fighter had keenly in-

terested Ruth.

To her he was a new type in every respect.

Here was a man free of greed, free of envy, evidently happier doing for others than in doing for himself, reputed the most desperately cool fighter in all the Island forces, and yet simple and tender as a child.

Soon it became plain to her that he was as tirelessly vigilant of her convenience and comfort as against a jungle night sur-

prise of his command.

No want could possess her or trouble stray her way, it seemed, that Captain Trigg did not divine it—and bang! the want was gratified or the trouble disappeared.

All which was so wholly new to Ruth. She had never had anything of the sort from anyone. And it was so very nice.

So very nice, in fact, Ruth was so grateful for it and came to value it so highly, that when after months had passed Tony mustered courage to declare his love for her, she had accepted—probably it would be most correct to say, she had accepted his service.

Certainly he had not stirred her imagination, much less set

her atrophied heart throbbing.

But she did highly value his obvious integrity, earnestness and—his utility.

He was helpful to have around, and, of course, a man any

woman could take pride in.
So they had become engaged, and hence it was that Morine's reference to future generations of their descendants had caused Ruth some temporary embarrassment.



CHAPTER XXX

WA-TU'S WOOING

Rising from his siesta earlier than did the Datus, quite before mid-afternoon, Wa-Tu, the enamored, began a sly quest for the fascinating little Esa.

Finally he found her, alone, arranging the council room for

the afternoon assembly.

"Ah! And so here you are, little daughter of Mt. Apo. Always are you busy—worth a dozen of Ina na Manuk's best."

"One must do her bidding, Chino," Esa quietly answered. "Yes, yes; slaves must do as they are bid, little ones as well as big ones, pretty ones as well as the ugly.

"Only for such beauties as you usually the bidding is to light

and pleasant tasks.

"So it should ever be, at least, if you were mine. The pleasuring of old Wa-Tu would be the heaviest asked of you; for others should be all the drudgeries. That would not be hard, would it, little maid?"

"N—o, not for long would it be hard, Chino," Esa enigmati-

cally answered.

"Fine, fine!" grinned old Wa-Tu, wholly failing to catch hint of veiled threat in her reply; "shortly we'd get on won-

derfully.

"And you, little beauty, you should be the envy of every woman in Mindanao, for I'd frock you in the brightest and softest silks of my country, fatten you on its richest foods, load your pretty neck and arms with rings and chains no Datu's favorite owns.

"You should play to me on that fascinating little instrument you finger 'til it trills softly as the whispers of the tiniest birds, sing to me the amorous little sighing melodies I note you here reserve for Usup as, once mine, you should always reserve

them for me.

"So, as now to him, so you should only sing to me when we

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are together, quite alone. That Wa-Tu will love; and you, little beauty?"

"I, Chino," Esa answered, "I sing only for my own people."
"But, once come to me, child, you will be of my people, I of

yours."

"I'll sing for none but those I choose," Esa answered, with just a threat of anger in her tone the Chino did not catch; "and as for being yours, I'm not, nor will I be—ever. Mark that Chino."

"But if I buy you, little one, you'll have to come to meyou'll be mine, to do with as I will, but always mine shall be

a kindly will in all that concerns you."

"Buy me you may, I suppose, if Ina wants to sell me, but what comes to you be sure you'll have no pleasure of, Wa-Tu; let Esa alone, or you will regret it—for a short time."

"For a short time? What do you mean, little one?"

"I mean-why, I'll have aught of no one I do not choose."

"Nonsense; only with me could you come near to realizing what you say. With others whomsoever you would remain a driven slave. None could be so fond of you as Wa-Tu. Come to me, beauty!" and a long taloned, shriveled yellow hand clasped her slender neck.

But only for an instant did it hold the shivering little figure, and as she tore herself free she landed him a kick that doubledhimupwithpainanddrewfromhimashriekthatbroughtIna

na Manuk and others from the outer gallery.

But as Wa-Tu remained half doubled, none noticed the still trembling Esa, and an angry explanation by the Chino that he had suffered a fall by catching his toe on a mat closed the incident, for all but its two principals.

Shortly thereafter the council was resumed.

"Tell us, Sabio," Datu Linta began, "if those 'Mergans do not war for plunder, among themselves or their neighbors, as you have been telling us, then why are they come here?"

"I cannot yet be sure myself, Datus," Go-Peng replied.
"They say they have fought the Paddies and their people against their will, were forced into warring on them to stop

their terrible abuses of the people of their colonies, beginning on some of their islands near to the 'Mergans' own country.

"They pretend that now they have freed the Filipinos from Spanish misrule, they will leave the Islands as soon as they have established order and find the Filipinos able to undertake their own government."

"Battling for others all the time! That beats me," sneered Telecoco; "they must be liars. How could they so profit them-

selves. You don't believe them, do you, Sabio?"

"Yes, Datu, I am inclined to believe them. When the 'Mergans step in and stop misrule among their neighbors and establish orderly government according to their theories, they promote growth of trade and prosperity in which they may share."

"Ah, but as you have explained their methods, Telecoco is right," said Linta; "others may share with them, other peo-

ples.

"True. But no two peoples profit most who trade alone with each other. The more your markets are crowded with buyers and sellers, no matter whence they come, the better.

"Would you that we Chinos should go?

"Are not both you and the Spaniards better off for our deal-

ings with you?"

"Y—es," hesitatingly agreed Telecoco, "since the Paddies and other users of their smoking boats have stopped us from taking by force of arms all we want from the vessels cruising our waters. One can't live long who subsists alone on his own fat. But with the Paddies smashed, won't our time come when the 'Mergans go?"

"No," smiled Go-Peng, "for they cannot leave, while true to their principles, until the power of you Datus is also smashed,

broken beyond chance of your regaining it."

"You mean they will rob us of our authority, free our slaves and limit every man to one wife?" growled Linta. "Ha! the dogs of unbelievers! The rivers shall run blood first. Nor shall they win so long as my Maratuns can swing krises."

"From all I can learn of their work in Luzon," answered

shrewd old Go-Peng, "the blood that reddens your rivers will be Moro blood.

"Take care, Datus. Think. Listen to your old friend.

"They are terrible in war, those 'Mergans. Resist them, and you perish.

"Better one wife than none.

"Better give up slaves and, if necessary, work to feed your-

selves than die to feed the vultures.

"And remember your brother Telecoco sees merit in their practice of *hiring* the Monobo slaves they need, instead of buying them.

"The wise among you may better so profit."



CHAPTER XXXI

BETTING HUMAN FLESH

Pleasantly enough rolled on the weeks and months for Esa with Ina na Manuk. Were all the slavery of the world anything like as benign as hers, better a thousand times that all the poor of the world were numbered among the property of masters.

Nor were the lives of Usup and Lancona materially less pleasant in their bondage. Their tasks were light, always were they well fed, and neither by Butu nor by Ina na Manuk were they treated with anything but kindness.

Indeed, with the exception of the lordlier Datus, such was

the general attitude of the Moros toward their slaves.

But, of course, no bondage is so light it does not gall and scar the hearts of all such as have known freedom.

And long for the simple delights of their home among the whispering tree tops and beside the Malbul's singing flood the more Esa and her father and mother did, the thicker grew their scars.

Meantime, Esa was progressing wonderfully, now more notably in her knowledge of pigeon Spanish, acquired from the Chinos.

Always were the Chino traders coming and going, ranging up and down the Rio Grande and its tributaries.

Of these Chinos, old Wa-Tu, the enamored, was the most

frequent comer—and the longest stayer.

To the last degree that such a shrewd and wise old trader as he could permit himself to become irrational about anything, he was crazy about Esa.

He was bound to have her.

But withal, Wa-Tu was greedy and cunning, knew how to wait, and was biding his time for a bargain.

Well did he know that Ina na Manuk had not been educat-

ing her for nothing, and would be certain to ask him a very fancy figure if he approached her directly with an offer.

But even to him who best knows how to wait, seldom come

quickly the things he would have.

And so it was with enamored old Wa-Tu.

Meantime, every opportunity that offered that he thought might escape the vigilance of Ina na Manuk, Wa-Tu sought

eagerly, but subtly, to win Esa's favor.

But all to no purpose. Never did she seek to conceal the repugnance which she had expressed in the violent kick she had given her old lover upon the occasion of his first wooing, the afternoon of Go-Peng's council with the Datus.

And just now Esa was taking great satisfaction in the fact that certain negotiations were about to mature, a situation wherein she felt sure she would have the satisfaction of see-

ing old Wa-Tu heavily bled and properly humbled.

For months past, Ina na Manuk had been developing and training a wonderful new fighting cock named Musla Manuk, meaning "large bird." With him already she had won the championship of the up-river towns by a long and bloody battle with Lanang, the former champion of the river, the bird that had passed from her to Datu Linta when Ina na Manuk bought Esa off the Ganta slave block.

Now Ina na Manuk had planned a battle which, should Musla win it, would give him the championship of the entire

river.

She had arranged a match with the owner of Maitum Manuk, meaning "strong bird" who enjoyed the honors of championship of the lower river, and whose owner happened to be —old Wa-Tu.

Always an inveterate gambler at the national game of cock fighting and holding supreme confidence in Musla, Ina na Manuk herself was ready enough to stake the last centavo of the family wealth on the issue of this fight.

But this Butu would not permit. More timid he than his wife, he held her original bet of one hundred pesos was as heavy a hazard on the bird as they should take. To be sure,

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Musla was a wonder, but does not all life teach us that vic-

tory is never the exclusive prerogative of the strong?

In most things Butu was heartily indulgent of Ina na Manuk, but when it came to her gambling his discretion gave him strength to restrain her.

Not another centavo of bis money or single item of his prop-

erty should she bet.

Ina na Manuk was peeved by Butu's parsimony but she did not show it. Admittedly the hundred *pesos* would be a hand-some winning.

And once the fight with Maitum was won, Butu would loosen up, doubtless, and let her back the next fight much

more liberally.

So now the family were off in their vintas, en route with their champion to the Inogug market, the middle point agreed on

for the fight.

The crowds that assembled at Inogug from up and down river points to see the fight were even far greater than those which gathered at Datu Linta's slave sale at Ganta. Always could a slave sale bring out a crowd, but never is a match between the champion cocks of the river pulled off that it does not pretty well empty all the villages and rancherias from Mt. Apo to the sea.

For centuries cock fighting has been the favorite sport among the tribesmen of the Islands, was current there away back in

the time of Magellan's bold voyagings.

Among the cities and larger towns of all the Islands it is a

source of important revenue to the municipal treasuries.

Never was it discouraged by the Paddies. Indeed, usually the congregation that streamed from the churches direct to the cock pits frequently saw their priest fighting a bird of his own.

At cock fighting the Moros are as good, clean sportsmen as any in the world. Win or lose, good feeling always prevails. Usually betting is light, but on occasions, family fortunes are staked, and may be lost, but the family cheerfulness and good humor are preserved.

Doubtless in some measure the holding of their tempers by the losers is due to the fact that all the population, both men and women, are at all times heavily armed. None lacks the flamy kris and many are never separated from their heavy campilans.

Where all are armed, and the precipitation of a row means more or less wholesale massacre, people think twice before

starting something.

When the family entered the cock pit, Ina na Manuk tenderly carrying Musla under her arm, there they found Wa-Tu everiting them with Moitum

Tu awaiting them with Maitum.

Squatted facing each other, the owners of the two champions were by turns stroking and fondling their respective birds or standing them on the ground, to strengthen their legs by scratching gravel in their struggles for freedom from their owner's tight grip of the tail.

So both birds were played, to supple their muscles and stiffen their tempers, preliminary to battling, after which they were

carefully bathed in cold water.

Next, the long, curved spurs, keen edged as lances, were firmly lashed to their heels.

This finished, the birds were submitted to the inspection of the judges, and as soon as their approval of the spurs and their lashing was had, the "Culuntungan" was sounded and the fight was on.

Bold of their pride of never having been beaten, Musla and Maitum lost no time in getting down to close, cunning fence.

Maitum made a clever feint that came near being the end of Musla, who was tempted to fly at his enemy's head, with purpose to slash his throat; but his attack was avoided, and beforehecould recover himself Maitum's spurhad deeply stabbed him in the chest.

Ha! blood, plenty of it!

And now the crowding thousands were roaring wildly as ever did the Roman audiences when steel began to clash and slash and lives to ebb, and back and forth at each other partisans

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were shrieking bets and the owners were anxiously crying encouragement to their respective champions.

Now the birds were fighting wickedly, but coolly and cautiously, like the highly trained and widely experienced swordsmen they were.

Occasionally, they had to be separated and rested.

Not even their mighty lungs could stand such furiously continuous battling, where neither gave the other an instant's pause for rest.

Moreover, wounds were coming fast. And shortly speed began to lessen.

At Maitum's first success the odds shifted to him, but since Musla had steadied down to unflinching, desperate fighting, the odds dropped, and now not even the oldest cock fighter of all the Moros dared venture odds on either bird.

And through it all Esa was having the time of her life, for she had come to love the sport as keenly as did Ina na Manuk.

As the pet slave of the owner of Musla, little Esa was prancing wildly about the ring, calling cheer to the family champion.

And her cheers and those of Musla's other partisans rose to shrieks of delight when presently Maitum fell, and lay upon the reddened sand unable to rise, blood spurting from his neck.

Ha, the fight was won! Theirs was the champion!

Musla: their beautiful Musla was now king of all the river

cock pits!

Musla! Look at him; isn't he splendid! Blood streaming from a score of wounds, but still squarely on his feet, weak, obviously very weak, his head drooping and his eyes dull, but still firmly on his feet! What a splendid victory!

But—Look! What is that?

Maitum is struggling to rise.

Yes, and he regains his feet just in the last instant before he would have been counted out and Musla's victory declared!

On his feet! Fancy it, with the blood still spurting from his neck!

A miracle it may sound but fact it is.

Steadying himself a moment, the mighty-hearted Maitum wobbled feebly toward the drooping Musla, summoned his dying energies, and with a last lucky spring scored a spur slash that left the brave Musla's head hanging by a tiny bit of skin!

So, often, are the fires of the dearest human ambitions in an

instant burned to ashes!

But of the family of Musla's owner, Ina na Manuk, and their partisans and backers, none took their defeat in the least to heart except Esa. The rest accepted their losses like the thoroughly good sportsmen they were, cheerfully even.

But to Esa it was a bitter disappointment, not that her mistress should fail to win, but because she had hoped to see the annoying old Wa-Tu bled of his silver and humbled in his

pride.

That she had cause for any deeper interest in the issue of the battle, neither Esa nor any of the others dreamed, until Butu

approached Ina na Manuk and smilingly remarked:

"Well, old mother, you see Butu was wise. The best cock has his day, must one day loose his laurels to his better. Now you'll be glad Butu refused to let you bet more than the hundred pesos, I'm thinking."

"Yes, Butu was wise," Ina na Manuk replied, with a brave attempt at a broad smile; "but when he forbade me to bet more of his property, then I bet mine. That Butu did not for-

bid, did he?"

"Why, no, old mother; but what did you bet?"

"Well, Butu must soon know; so I may as well tell him, that against three hundred of Wa-Tu's silver pesos, I bet—Esa!"

"Welldone; very welldone, old mother—or at least well done it would be were we winners, for that's a bigger price than ever any Monobo girl was sold for. But—well, maybe it will make you a little less reckless in your chicken gambling hereafter."

But whether the loss of Esa, to improve whom as a marketable commodity Ina na Manuk had worked so hard and by

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whose ultimate sale she had expected to realize so much, served to restrain her in her gambling or not, certain it was that it convinced her that the betting of human flesh was not unattended by peril.

One glance at Esa had sufficed to bring her to that conclusion, for since, standing near them, she had heard of her loss to Wa-Tu, the girl's face blazed with anger and hatred of the

bitterest.

Indeed, that one glance doubtless saved somebody's life, for it forewarned her against the tiger spring Esa presently made and the fierce snatch she made at the kris handle in Ina na Manuk's girdle.

And when, with Butu's help, Esa was overpowered, and he dragged her across the arena to old Wa-Tu, Butu remarked:

"Here's the rest of your winnings, Chino—and look out they don't bite you!"





CHAPTER XXXII

A HUNGER FOR TENDERNESS

Poor Tony Trigg!

The simplest, sweetest, and soundest of one of the most attractive types of plain, garden variety of man, normal, warm,

human!

Vulgarly strong and healthy, handsome as a lean young Viking, riotously affectionate as the sunny-hearted merry are ever apt to be, craving tenderness and caresses as the dower right from Mother Nature they indeed are for all such as he, few indeed are the women the wide world round who, with half a color of right, or even of slim excuse, would not be fondling him—crushing him with embraces, smothering him with kisses.

Love? Heavens, the man had love enough in his system to do a score of women, and do them all well—scant measure to

none.

Love? Why, his big, unselfish nature was so surcharged with it that the tiniest scrap of it would be more love than most women ever come to know.

And now all of it, in one great, warm, unbroken wave, was breaking and chilling on the frozen coast line of Ruth Snell's frigid personality.

God, but it was a tragedy.

He had so much to give and she so little.

Better a thousand times pour out living affections at the shrine of the cherished dead.

And it was all so unfair—unjust, unequal.

It was all give and no take.

And ever must it so remain; never may one take what does not exist.

For Ruth's nature was as barren of love as are frozen wastes of flowers.

But this, of course, Tony did not yet actually know.

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Even something of the frank confiding of a warm friendship, wherein worries are outpoured for sympathy and sympathy subtly divines and solaces unexpressed anxieties, might have sufficed him.

Who knows? None may tell for sure what would suffice another. But Tony was so wholly unselfish that perhaps even that much would have done for him—would have answered

to leave him entirely content in his love for Ruth.

But through the long months of their daily association and the many weeks of the closer intimacy of their engagement, all his joy of her was such as he got of his love of seeing and serving her—her only concession, a quiet, contented tolerance of his presence.

Nevertheless, if Tony only knew it, which, of course he didn't, such concession was infinitely more than she had ever granted to any other man—or to any woman or child, for

that matter.

And just herein lay the biggest tragedy of all—the fact of Ruth's sheer poverty.

To Tony she was honestly giving all she had to give—her-

self as ignorant of her pitiful destitution as was he!

Meantime, Tony was hungering and thirsting for tenderness, for the caresses that make the love of a man and a maid the most infinite bliss this old, old world has yet managed to afford, the caresses that are the pledge of ultimate fulfillment. He was crazy to hold her in his arms and seal his lips on hers.

He was wild to plunge his face into the waves of her hair and there, so submerged, ever to leave it. Drown? Ah, yes, to be sure, he might. But why not? What death could be happier?

He wanted her beside him for hours, and hours and hours out in the velvety blue tropical night, seated within the shadows of the *platanos*, his arm around her waist, her cheek cuddled close to his, silent both, but brains aflame with dreams—of their future together.

He was crazy to put her in a vinta and push out into the seclusion of the pearl-gray mists of the river, and therein, reclined at her dear feet and hidden from all the world as com-

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pletely as if they were the only tenants of a planet, to drift—

and drift, and drift.

Instead of all which, poor Tony had to content himself with —what? With placid smiles of approval of his untiring services and attentions and with the touch now and then of finger tips that lay in his for a moment just as still and cold and expressionless as if they belonged to a dead hand!

Poor Tony!

And, of course, he was quite too much in love to reason on the subject. Instead, he just loved on—and hoped.

Tonight he was so loving and hoping, as they lounged in the

long chairs on her gallery, when he pleadingly asked:

"May I not hold your hand, please, sweetheart?"

"But now why should you hold my hand, Tony? The fact is I'm rather tired of an unusually vexing day in school."

"Why, darling? My God, because I love you, and want many things you never give me. Silly beggar, you seem to think me, but you'd never so hold, dear, I'm sure, if you loved me as much as I love you. And sometimes I'm almost wondering, I'm bound to tell you, dear, whether you really love me at all."

"Love you, Tony? Why, of course I love you. Most assuredly. How can you doubt it? You have my plighted word. And you know I'm a serious girl, never given to trifling on any

subject."

"Know it, darling! Of course I know it. And that's just the trouble, maybe, you're too d---, —well, you're too serious to—well, to stay healthy, mentally healthy, I mean."

"Why, boy, whatever are you trying to express?"

"Oh, Ruth, it's so hard for me to say. To me you are as beautiful as a divine spirit, and sometimes I can't help fearing you will always remain to me as hopelessly intangible as one."

"Intangible? Tony, intangible?"

"Just that, Ruth, dear. Love, full grown love, is no wobbling weakling; it's an eager athlete that wants to seize and grip and crush, tenderly crush, and make its object know it's

alive, and strong, very strong, incapable of exhaustion, an athlete that wants to grip and never let go. Anyway, that's what a man's love is—and what it seems to me a girl's love must be, when it's full grown. Look at Cupid, Ruth; you could never think of him as cold, or of his tug at his bow string as anything but firm and strong."

"Ah, Tony," Ruth answered, "you are more trying than the wildest of my little pagan wards. By all the higher sciences teach us, shall I never be able to prevail upon you to see life

and live it in harmony with their lofty teachings?"

"Lofty! That's it, dear. You're always mentally cruising outside of my atmosphere, for I'm of the earth, earthy, loving the sun that warms it, the soft lapping waves that tenderly kiss it, the grass and the trees that clothe it, the flowers that adorn it, the warm, throbbing life it cradles. Just a very simple, commonplace type of a man, you see, content where he's been put, enjoying his work and his play and knowing pretty well where he is at as long as he can feel soft, warm soil under his heels."

And then, after a short pause and a deep sigh, added:

"My misfortune, of course. Must be jolly fine, I suppose, up there high aloft of everybody where you live, sweet, but it's all strange country to me; and, dear, please, I think I'd rather you'd not try to take me up there—can't imagine there's anything up among the clouds to grip and tussle with."

"My dear boy, I'm afraid all your views of life are crude and archaic as—yes, I may as well say it, as crude as those of a cave man. You dear, big battler, you've always got to be gripping things, haven't you? If you did not so tenderly tend the flowers you have banked thick around your quarters and were not ever so kindly considerate and thoughtful of me, I should think your only joy in life was in seizing and crushing or smothering things. Really, dear, you're hard for me to understand, sometimes."

"Me? Christmas, Ruth, I'm simple as a primer. Guess that's just the trouble; you can't manage to think down in my raw

terms."

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"Down, Tony, down?" and for a moment the beautiful face wore perhaps the nearest approach to a wistful expression he had ever seen on it, and when she resumed her voice was very low; "Down? Ah, dear, sometimes you have me wondering whether you are not the soarer and I the groveller! Raw! Yes, of course you're raw, rude in your strength, but you're the bravest, merriest, truest and most unselfish soul I have ever known."

"Shucks, Ruth-"

"But, Tony, you're all that. And it is only right I should tell you you're the only man I've ever taken even the most casual interest in. Everyone who knows you loves you, and I, well from the first your love has been a torrent I could not stem if I would, but it is a torrent that does not sweep me on so fast that the way is not illuminated by the lights of reason."

"Lights of reason be—be blessed, my darling. Whatever the deuce have the lights of reason to do with love? Not the brightest ray of reason's most blinding beams may ever penetrate the dusky dingles where all great loves haunt and brood when not bathed in that glorious effulgence of realization that pales reason's light and would blind the very sun."

"Ah, Tony, true enough it is that gloom shrouded all things until the lamps of reason were lighted, material and spiritual alike. Mankind were blind gropers among awesome mysteries until, fused by the white heat of reason's light into their component parts, most of the mysteries of life now stand revealed, among them love as well, at least measurably revealed.

"Love! Tony, why a saw old as time has it that love begets love. But nothing of the sort. Love is a toxin atom that, active in one, seizes upon another, feebly resistant of its attack, possesses and infects it. Doubtless, one day, shortly, the mental microscopists will have its bacilli isolated, and perhaps—who knows—will discover some protective countervailing germ."

For some time Tony sat staring at Ruth in stark agitation that nearly approached terror. Her usually calm violet eyes were now blazing with—good God, could it be madness?

But presently he steadied, with realization that it was only an unusual manifestation of the hyper-sanity that, he was beginning to dimly suspect, kept all the blood in Ruth's system busy in her brain.

There really wasn't much to answer. But as the big curly-haired captain rose to take his leave, prey to his hunger for caresses, he extended his arms toward her and softly pleaded.

"Won't you come to me, my love?"

"What, Tony," Ruth quietly answered, looking up at him with an expression of mild reproach; "what? An embrace, you mean? Nonsense, boy; an embrace is a deplorable waste of energy, no more. You need to conserve all your energies for your campaigns, I, mine for my school work. This climate is so exhausting of the strength that we must conserve our forces."

"But just one little kiss, dear?" Tony gently persisted.

"Now you big, stupid child," Ruth calmly smiled, "how many times must I tell you that kisses are nothing but conveyors of disease germs!"

"Well, Ruth," Tony wearily answered, "I guess one time

will about do for tonight, so buenas noches, and I'm off."



CHAPTER XXXIII

WA-TU'S BLUNDER

In the Moro Provinces, Prosperity implies Slavery and Polygamy.

At least to the extent that the Criminal Rich of the Moro

Islands are slave owners and sport harems.

Which goes to show two interesting facts; first, that neither latitude nor longitude serve to widely differentiate humanity; and, secondly, that, while regarded by us as crude savages, nevertheless, the Moros are close prototypes of that conspicuous class among ourselves which Go-Peng described as "Lords by Money Right."

And, therefore, by such as may know that the Chinos are foremost among the Captains of Predatory Industry in Mindanao, it will be rightly assumed that they are its most active slave dealers and by no means its least busy polygamists, and in their treatment of their women and their slaves never are

they notably tender and seldom even humane.

Which goes far toward proving another interesting fact—that for any woman who is not best satisfied to begin and end her career as a more or less fascinating and seductive exhibitor and purveyor of feminine physical charms, but who instead fancies she might get deeper draughts of the sweeter joys of life by alliance with one man likely to sit tight and ride straight with her, better a thousand times that she become the helpmate of the poorest Monobo or 'Mergan slave than the lawful wife of a rich polygamist.

For, of course, the Chinos, like all the polygamists, have their lawful wives, who, as is also customary elsewhere, are

usually women of their own race.

And it was to the vigilance if not the overkindly care of his Chino wife that Wa-Tu committed Esa, the long coveted prize his valiant bird Maitum had won for him at the Inogug market.

Her feelings in the matter, those of his Chino wife?

To Wa-Tu, rightly enough, her feelings were occasion for no concern. If she had ever indulged feelings on the subject, doubtless long ago they had been case-hardened by her custody of Esa's many predecessors, of all breeds, ages and colors, whom Wa-Tu's broadly catholic tastes had led him to acquire and commit to her charge.

But probably she had no feelings at all on the subject, no resentment, no sense of suffering a wrong or outrage. For be it remembered, that where polygamy is an openly established and recognized institution, there the ladies enjoy a great advantage over most of their white sisters of—civilization.

There women know the brevity of their day and make the best of it while it lasts; here women seldom fail to make the best of their day, but still labor under distressing illusions respecting its brevity.

There they know that the thumbed and dog-eared pack must

inevitably make way for a fresh pack; here, they don't.

At least, none here know it save such as go into training for an alliance with some Lord of Money Right, the girls who inevitably early learn to cherish no illusions respecting fidelity and hence remain immune to sense of injury or grief where they find it lacking.

As for Esa's feelings, by the local code she was not entitled to have any of her own. Honored by her master's favors, it

should be a joy to her to pleasure him.

Only in her case, shrewd old Wa-Tu well knew he could count on nothing of the sort. To him she was a new species, and he was much too cunning a dickerer and diplomat not to realize she would be better dealt with along new lines. She should mellow better by cozening than by compelling.

Thus her first few weeks in the Wa-Tu household made a

period of ease and luxury she had never known.

And so far she enjoyed herself hugely, for she would have been less even than a savage maid if she had not found delight in the brilliant-hued, filmy stuffs in which the Chino wife decked

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her and in the gleaming bangles and chains with which Wa-Tu loaded her.

And, of course, it was nice to have nothing to do but to feed

generously and to preen and admire herself.

Only the trammeling of the clothes was a nuisance—a nuisance she never got used to and always resented to the end

of—well, to the end.

But while the clothes were hot and most annoyingly restrictive of the free movement of a maid always accustomed to go nearly naked, still they were lovely to look at and to have.

And throughout this period Wa-Tu as a lover was a highly ornate work of art, all gentleness and consideration. Had she been a princess of the Ming Dynasty, he could not have treated her with more consideration.

And so good was his memory of the violent kick Esa had given him on the day of his first wooing of her, that through this stage of his courtship he ventured on no familiarities.

He knew something of this world and its people, not so much as his brother, the great scholar, Go-Peng, but enough to feel sure in his own mind that no girl could long withhold her kindness from one who so generously showered her with luxuries.

But the weary weeks that he waited, and smirked, and wheedled, brought no change in Esa; so utterly he failed that one day his really broad knowledge of human nature brought him to a rude awakening.

What a fool he was!

Having money, he could buy; having power, he could take; but how could such a shriveled old scrap of yellow parchment as he hope ever to win voluntary tenderness from any young girl?

He was wasting his time. She was wearing out his silks.

The gilding would be wearing off the bangles and chains with which he had adorned her.

Wa-Tu was indeed a fool.

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He was wasting time—and the older one is, the less time he has to waste.

And like a bolt out of a clear sky Wa-Tu's awakening became communicated to Esa.

One morning the Chino wife stripped her of all her fineries and put her among the rudest household slaves and at its meanest tasks.

From the most envied of all the household, she had become its rawest jest.

Was there ever such an idiot of a girl?

Ha, what girl or woman of all the river side would not jump at the privilege of being showered, as was she, with the fineries of old Wa-Tu?

But while none were backward in telling her plainly what they thought, on Esa their views had no effect.

Disciplined in a measure by her life with Ina na Manuk, she accepted her tasks. The several weeks so passed were black and hateful weeks to her.

But when the Chino wife plainly told her that if she would accept the preferred place in the harem Wa-Tu desired her to occupy, she would be restored to all the luxuries of which she had been deprived, Esa simply answered:

"I will have no man save of my own choosing, and him I will

kill before I'll share him with another."

Whereupon, acting, of course, under Wa-Tu's instructions, the Chino wife had her seized by others of the household, evidently preadvised to be ready, and began beating her with a bamboo stick.

Like the now madly insane little wild young thing she was, Esa desperately fought, scratching, gouging, tearing handfuls of hair from her detainers.

But all to no purpose.

They were too many for her.

And finally she fell, bleeding pitifully and too weak to rise. Throughout the night Esa lay still in the corner where she had been dragged, helpless of her hurts, but the afternoon of

WA-TU'S BLUNDER

the following day, recovered sufficiently to be up and about, she came to the Chino wife and very humbly said:

"Enough; I have had enough. I am Wa-Tu's slave. It is for

him to do with me as he pleases. I submit."

"You will go willingly?"

"Willingly."
"When?"
"Tonight."

"Ah, so," smiled the Chino wife; "that's better; that will do. They all come to their senses sooner or later. And now to

dress and deck you for Wa-Tu's favor."

Whereupon Esa was bathed, lotioned, scented, tricked out in silks and again loaded with the gleaming bangles and chains.

And maybe that was not a joyous afternoon for old Wa-Tu! Certainly, it was altogether quite the reddest red-letter day

of his age if not of his entire life.

For, remember, he had permitted himself to become, in his oriental way, as madly enamored of Esa as ever in his youth of any of the daintiest beauties of his native land.

Long had he wanted her, and now, at last, he was to have

her.

Oh joy of joys!

And all the afternoon he was capering about so giddily that he even had the misfortune to break the two-inch little finger nail cultivated by all Datus and Chinos as the insignia of their independence of all forms of manual labor.

But why worry over even the loss of one's insignia of gentility when the sun is sinking into the rice paddies and the

evening of his honeymoon is at hand? Wa-Tu didn't care. Why should he?

He could grow another little finger nail, but was he likely ever to be vouchsafed such another delightful honeymoon?

Grieve over the finger nail? Nonsense. Tonight he would be merry—how could one be aught else but merry on a night that promised him nothing but bliss?

But shrewd old Wa-Tu had blundered. He had made the

most irretrievably fatal blunder of his life—one that it was never given him to regret and try to correct.

For once his keen judgment of human nature had been at

fault.

He had failed to remember that by no means all wills that bend are broken.

He had ignored a fact that none knew better than he, that few feminine minds are incapable of dissimulation.



CHAPTER XXXIV WA-TU'S HONEYMOON

It was the early evening of old Wa-Tu's honeymoon.

He was there.

And so was the moon.

But the honey was gone.

However, that didn't matter to Wa-Tu; he was not caring a centavo.

Of course, the reader will remember that Wa-Tu had blundered, and knows that all who blunder must pay, but occasionally blunderers are spared regrets.

So it was with Wa-Tu in the matter of his honeymoon.

Sometimes the gods are good to us, even the weird symbols of divinity Chinos bow down to, and abstract us from contemplation of our blunders and the disappointments and griefs

they bring.

Which was especially fortunate in Wa-Tu's case, for otherwise time to grow many yards of new little fingernail must have elapsed before his recovery from the shock of the loss of his honey—at least sufficiently to find heart to be casting about for attractive material for a new honeymoon.

And the honey?

Little Esa, whose voluptuous beauty and wild grace had set desire gnawing him?

Where was she?

Ask the cool breezes blowing down from Mt. Apo. Maybe

they can tell.

Or—ah, yes, far better ask the Luciernagas, the giant fireflies of the tropics. Who so surely as they must know? Not even the most sinister slinker among the shadows of the night can escape their bright-blinking lamps!

Ah, there comes a big Luciernaga from up river. Let's ask

him.

To be sure; no mistake that time. Scored the first shot.

Stealing through the pearl-grey mists that shroud the river, sticking tight within the shadow of the bank, swiftly sweeping up stream on the flooding tide and driving the faster of all the force her sinewy arms were able to put into rapid paddle strokes, Esa had nearly escaped him.

But once he had seen her, the strangeness of a maid paddling so desperately through the night had so roused the *Luciernaga's* curiosity that he had hovered near and overheard her talk-

ing softly to herself.

"There's no doubt about it," she had said, "powerful as is the *Ingorandy* magic among our own people, it is just of no

avail at all against these Moros and Chinos.

"Through the weeks that they were good to me at Wa-Tu's, as well as through the weeks that they made me labor and beat me, I prayed and prayed to *Dewata* and invoked *Toomulkun*, *Busau* and the *Limbings* to succour me. But to no purpose. They did not respond.

"Ha! Had they come, it would have been so easy.

"One flutter of the blood-red wings of Toomulkun, one shrill whirr of the enormous black wings of Busau, one brief appearance of the limping Munowog or of any of the frightful little Limbings, and all the Chinos would have scattered through the rice paddys, leaving Esa free.

"And the hideous, hateful old bag of bones, Wa-Tu, he was too old to run and the *Limbings* would have swarmed over

him to his suffocation.

"Yes, for any of our gods all this would have been so easy.

"They must be afraid of the Chinos' magic.

"Strange, strange! I must always remember that when I get back to Pugsan. And then I may be more powerful than any ruler the Monobos ever had.

"Fancy! Our Monobos fear Dewata and his lesser gods more than anything else, and pay, how heavily they pay Usup to

beseech for them Dewata's aid and mercy.

"The fools!

"For I, Esa, child of Usup and Lancona, have come to know for sure that the magic of Lancona, the medicine woman, the

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magic that she gets from the trees and herbs of the forest, is far more powerful than all the magic of Usup, the great *Ingorandy*, and of *Dewata* and all the minor gods Usup invokes.

"Ah, Lancona's magic never fails—never, never fails.

"And I, Esa, I know that magic, and I, Esa, am more powerful than Lancona, for she does not know her magic is so much

stronger than that of Usup.

"Yes, yes, and I must be very careful to guard the magic I keep always hidden in my waist cloth, the tiny little packages—the ones I had so much difficulty hiding from that Chino woman when she was making me wear those beautiful Chino things.

"Huh! Isn't it lucky so little of the magic serves!

"Just a few tiny grains, rightly used, and all your troubles vanish.

"Ho, ho! It makes me laugh.

"That foolish old Wa-Tu, brother of the big Chino Pundita, one of the most powerful of all his people! Ha, the old fool thought he had Esa at his mercy, to play with and to make do just what he liked.

"But he didn't know the heart of Esa.

"Share her man with a lot of other women! Never, never.

"Esa would die first, if it were necessary to save her from such a horrid fate.

"But never need she die to save herself while she has handy some of Lancona's splendid magic.

"Foolish old Wa-Tu!

"Now the women of his harem are tearing their hair and the

children screaming their grief!

"Ah, Esa can see him eating his rice and then sipping his tea, the tea into which I slipped a few grains of the magic that makes Esa more powerful than all the *Ingorandys* and all the gods of Mt. Apo!

"One sip of the tea, or two or three sips at the most, and then, after a moment of writhing on his mat and grippings at his fast

slowing heart, old Wa-Tu straightens and lays still!

"And so shall die all who ever injure Esa or seek to force her to do their will!"

It was out of the pearl-grey mists that ever of nights shroud the yellow flood of the Rio Grande, and shortly before the dawn, that Esa steered her *vinta* in among those of Butu, and landed.

And when, shortly after the family were astir, she entered the house, it was perhaps one of the greatest surprises they ever had.

"How's this, girl; what are you doing here?" Ina na Manuk asked.

"I have left Wa-Tu, and have come back to you to stay."

"But you are his slave, girl."

"Yes, I was, but Wa-Tu was-sick-and perhaps he did not

get well. I ran away—and I come to stay.

Here was a dilemma, but the shrewd old Butu solved it when he suggested to Ina na Manuk that it was quite possible that Esa had made herself such a terror to the Chino that perhaps he would be glad to sell her back to them at a cheap price.

And developments came fast, for it was only a few hours later that a vinta arrived from down river, carrying Wa-Tu's head

man, in search of the fugitive.

And thus early came to them the news that the evening of Esa's flight, Wa-Tu, while taking his evening meal, had sickened and died almost as suddenly as if struck by lightning, and that all the household felt sure that Esa had poisoned him and were insistent that she should be brought back to be judged by the Kali and punished for her crime.

And just here Ina na Manuk and Butu were quick to recog-

nize the arrival of opportunity.

Seldom among the Moros are punishments inflicted as provided by the *Luwaren* when anyone may profit by their suspension.

Justice, revenge, what do they count against money? One

cannot buy anything with justice or revenge.

And thus it happened that Ina na Manuk managed to re-

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cover full legal title to Esa at a price, figured against the sum Wa-Tu had bet against her, that made her one of the best bargains Ina na Manuk had ever secured.

And as a part of the consideration, Ina na Manuk exacted from the Chino the promise that his people shall not talk of

their suspicions respecting Wa-Tu's sudden death.





CHAPTER XXXV

NAKED BOLOS IN THEIR HANDS

Swiftly and almost silently Morine's launch swept up the Rio Grande on the breast of the flooding tide, with all lights out.

He was bent on checkmating Linta and Telecoco.

It was near dawn, within an hour of it, and the little expedition was nearing Datu Telecoco's rancheria.

Beside the pilot idled Morine, Tony and Captain Catron, the latter the depot quartermaster, come along for the fun of it. The insignificant but deadly muzzle of a machine gun pro-

truded truculently over the starboard bow.

Around the decks sprawled the slender khakied forms of twenty of Trigg's constabulary, a nondescript lot so hopelessly mixed of blood that probably none could be rightly described as half-breeds. Scarcely dependable material for desperate service one would say at first thought or glance, and yet an eager, searching, tough lot of fighters when well led.

So still was the heavy tropical night and thick the mists through which they were stealing, that, but for the soft chugchug of the propeller, the low ripple under the bow and occasional dim glimpses of the shore line, it would have seemed that they were stalking some star-dwelling enemy through empty inter-stellar space.

"Tony, I've changed my mind," Morine suddenly remarked.

"The devil you have! In what respect?"

"Why, there's an easier way to throw kinks into this Talker to Alligators than hammering him."

"The hell there is! Going to fly at him with a slate and a

primer, I suppose."

"No, not exactly," Morine smiled; "I'm going ashore, alone with an orderly, to con or bluff him into coming aboard as our guest."

"Not if I can stop you, Joe; it's silly suicide."

"Nonsense, Tony. I know my man. You'll have to leave him to me, this time—and if I fail, then you can print SILLY

on my headstone."

And then presently he added, "Detail me an orderly, slow down and put me ashore. Lay to here for twenty minutes, and then split the river for the village. Come there, all lights on and stand by your machine gun, and at the first shot you hear shell hell out of the show. Don't mind me; I'll look out for myself."

"Well, you're the K. O. But I'd never treat you that way,

Joe."

"What do you mean?"

"Why make you sit on your bally hunkers in the middle of a d-d river while your mate was marching up on such a bunch of mad hellions as Telecoco's village holds."

"Good old Tony," Morine smiled, patting him on the shoulder; "I understand. You shall have your whack yet, no fear." And then Captain Catron broke in for the first time, "If

you've no objections, Governor, I'll come along."

"Thanks, Captain," Morine rather doubtfully replied; "but—but—why, yes, by all means, if you like. It will help out my con of an official visit."

As they were passing over the side Trigg wistfully queried, "Wouldn't suit you to let me come along, Joe, and leave the

command of the company to my teniente?"

"Now, now! Tony," Morine indulgently smiled; "you're too good a soldier for that. Got to play your K. O.'s judgment, you know."

All in rope-soled and canvas-topped "sneakers," silently as ghosts the three stalked through the grey mists, wading through

rice paddys or crouching along their dykes.

Naked in their hands Morine and the orderly carried their bolos. A shot would be fatal—they must jump Telecoco before their presence was suspected.

Arrived at the edge of the village, Morine leading, within the shadow of a hut he came face to face with a drowsy Moro sentry, who stood leaning on his heavy campilan blade.

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But no alarm was sounded.

A headless man can manage no better in the way of noise

than a momentary gurgle.

Beneath the huts and among the tall poles that supported them they slowly stole, until, just as the dawn was greying the East, they stopped in front of the casa grande that must represent the joint palace and harem of the lord of the district.

Loudly Morine hallooed, but had to call repeatedly before

from within came an inquiry, "Who is it?"

"I; it is I, the Sultani of the 'Mergans, come to pay a visit of honor to the great Datu Telecoco."

"But why are you come in the night?" Telecoco's voice sus-

piciously queried.

"To avoid the sun, Datu. Your Mindanao sun is trying to the 'Mergans. Come out. No danger threatens you. I am ashore alone as you will see."

But it was only after five minutes of parleying that the drowsy, half-roused Moro chief came out on the gallery of his house.

"Telecoco," Morine began, "I am here with this great trader captain to do you the honor of inviting you to come with us to Cotabato for a conference, whither we shall be inviting and taking all the other great Datus, to learn your wishes and try to plan to meet them."

Just then the big launch rounded a point and stood in within thirty yards of them, few men showing above her rail but all lights lit and reflecting from the waters a circle of golden

stars.

Alert on the saddle of the machine gun sat Trigg.

"You see you are to have the honor of a journey on our great smoking vessel of state. Come on board, and we'll proceed to visit and pick up your brother Datus."

"But tell me, 'Mergan, why-"

"Oh, come along and I'll explain aboard. One does not hesitate to accept an honor, Datu. Come!"

It took a lot more parleying, but finally Morine's strategy won.

Decked in his gayest duds, bright-hued and stately as a peacock, the Talker to Alligators passed aboard the launch—only to be seized, gagged and bound by Trigg the moment he

got into the cabin.

And no more was he safely aboard than Morine began a careful search of Telecoco's house, for a letter his spies had told him had been recently received which fully detailed the plans of the Datus to resist the 'Mergans and the part to be played

by each.

Topsy turvy he turned the house, while Telecoco's numerous wives and progeny dodged gingerly about, wide-eyed of their wonder at what it all meant, and outside the village streets seethed with a heavily-armed throng that had the hearty will, but lacked the leadership to pounce upon and finish him.

At last his search was rewarded; he held in his hand the letter that amply proved all his suspicions of the Datus' duplicity.

And then out through the scowling mob Morine stalked and down to the shore, where he hailed to Trigg to send ashore the Datu Dikaya, whose presence aboard had been a mystery to Trigg that Morine had not explained.

Dikaya was the cowed and timid chief of a small district near Cotabato, long since a slave to opium and humbled by the

Spaniards.

As Dikaya was shambling ashore, Morine called, "If you hear my gun, Tony, sweep the village with your rifles and gun."

And then, attended only by Captain Catron and the orderly, he led the Datu to the village market house, a great roofed shelter, open of sides and high on poles like all the other huts.

Come there, he ordered Telecoco's head Saligan to summon all the head men of the district and the gente of the village to

a council.

Quickly they thronged around him, the leaders by his direction ascending to the platform and squatting behind him while the populace crowded thick beneath him, all scowling and evidently hungry for his blood as a pack of starving wolves.

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Standing at the edge of the platform, his meager escort at his elbows and Datu Dikaya cringing near, Morine addressed the crowd.

He was very brief, but while his face was smiling, his words

were verbal stabs.

"Your Datu Telecoco, the Feared, He Who Talks to the Alligators, displeases me," he began. "Telecoco has been plotting against the 'Mergans. He shall cut the grass of Cotabato streets like the meanest slave. And now I, the 'Mergan Sultani, give you a new Datu, the great Datu Dikaya, a man of wisdom and peace. Here he stays and will rule you. Obey him in everything—or I'll return and feed the last of you to the alligators. If there are any objections, I want to hear them now!"

And he whirled on the Saligans seated behind him.

Sourly all glowered, but no voice answered his except that of the badly frightened Dikaya, who trembling, pleaded his fears.

Ignoring him, Morine finished, "Very well. It is best you should make no objections. Mind Dikaya has none but good reports to make of you," after which he descended to the ground and returned to the launch.

As they stepped aboard, Trigg heaved a deep sigh and remarked, "Mighty glad you're back; saved my life, I reckon,

for that's the first breath I've drawn for an hour!"

And when, turning to Catron, Tony asked, "And how did

you enjoy the morning, Captain?"

"Why, Tony," came the answer, "as a fun picker I'm regarding myself as a rotten failure. The next time I want any fun I won't follow Joe Morine. By God, but I'd rather spend a night adrift among the alligators of the Rio Grande than attend another of Joe's lectures, my word for that!"

And when just as Morine was about to order full speed ahead, a splash alongside drew their attention in time to see the thoroughly terrorized Dikaya seize the low launch rail and

drag himself aboard.

At Morine's feet Dikaya crouched and chattered,

"By the love of your mother, great Sultani, do not leave me here. Telecoco is terrible. You do not know him. He is in league with *Balbal*. He will turn himself into a serpent and bite me, or suck my blood like a *murcielago* or send his alligators to eat me and my children. Save me! Save me, good Sultani!"

"You stay put, where I put you, you old cur, or it will be my pistol bullets that bite you, my bolo that sucks your black blood"—and landed the cringing figure a kick that lift-

ed it back into the river.



CHAPTER XXXVI

DATU LINTA'S NUPTIALS

Into the not unpleasant routine of life with Ina na Manuk, Esa would have dropped happily enough but for the fact that she confronted the first great grief of her life.

Her parents were dead.

Usup, the greatest *Ingorandy* and *Lukus* of all the Monobos, and Lancona, their wisest medicine woman, were no more.

Infinite is the love of savage parents for their young. And what savage parents ever had such a wonderful daughter as Esa? For her they had planned and worked so long, of her expected so much.

She, why they had made that child as wise as were they both. The last of their secrets and mysteries, the most powerful of their magic, they had instructed her in until she was as wise as they.

And never for a moment had they lost hope that one day she at least would manage to escape and return to rule the clan.

When the defeat of Musla by Maitum tore her from them, both had grieved and fasted until they were no more than shadows of the sturdy hill folk they were when the Saligan Ishmael put them on the Ganta slave block.

And really of their grief they had perished.

For Usup, wasted to feebleness, had succumbed to a light attack of fever.

And the good Lancona, the wisest medicine woman of all the hill tribes of Mindanao, had become so weak she was no more able to work, and one evening while idling incautiously near some reeds by the river, was struck senseless by the tail of a lurking alligator, and dragged into the flood and devoured.

And hard, indeed, on the girl was the blow, for tenderness

begets tenderness and the indulgence of savage parents makes

fond offspring.

But Esa was young and strong and bold, made bold and ambitious by the rare training for high authority her dead parents had given her.

Their work for her must not go in vain. Their ambition for

her must be realized.

She must, she would yet rule her people as they had planned.

And many, very, very many were the velvet-blue tropical nights that, withdrawn into seclusion among the platanos, Esa sat trilling on her dearly-loved kuteehapee the gentle, whispering Monobo melodies that Usup had taught her, alternately dreaming over Usup's fascinating mysteries and Lancona's powerful magic, and struggling to mature plans for escape to her home among the tree tops by the Malbul.

Unhappily none of her plans there made was ever to be re-

alized.

Fate reserved in store for her many mingled perils, disappointments and joys before she was ever again to have the chance to go questing in the Malbul's sands for *Busau*'s big, black eggs.

Returning from his trip with Telecoco to Cotabato to confer with Morine, Datu Linta had spent what was to prove for him a very fateful day with Butu and Ina na Manuk.

There he had again seen Esa, for the first time since her sale

at his Ganta market.

The girl had developed wonderfully in every way. Mentally Ina na Manuk had made her superior even to most of the Moro girls or women, for she had educated her in a measure few of them enjoy.

And physically Esa had more than fulfilled the promise of her earlier youth. Now she had developed such a perfect riot of voluptuous charms as to make her more fascinating to the

old Datu than any girl he had ever seen.

Throughout his stay he could not keep his eyes off her, and naturally Ina na Manuk was not slow to note it and to realize that the time was come to bag the handsome profit she

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had anticipated as certain when Butu was chiding her re-

specting the high price she had paid for the girl.

Nevertheless, Datu Linta was cunning and bided his time, and it was not until some weeks later that the Saligan Ishmael drifted in one day, and, after partaking of refreshments, intimated that the Datu Linta might use another slave.

Of what sort?

Oh, it was a girl slave Linta wanted; something like that Monobo Esa; yes, perhaps she herself would do.

The bargaining took two days, but it was so quietly con-

ducted that Esa had no suspicion of it.

Indeed, the first hint she had of her disposal was as the Saligan Ishmael had firmly gripped her wrist to lead her aboard his *vinta*, when Ina na Manuk told her she was destined to the honor of becoming the first favorite of the great Datu Linta's harem.

Of course, the cunning Saligan had never admitted as much to Ina; but the high price she had managed to crowd him up to left Ina no doubt in the matter—well she knew that Linta was never recklessly extravagant in anything save in his outlays on his harem.

And well it was for him that Ishmael had not forgotten the fierce spear stab Esa had given him at Pugsan, and now was

taking no chances.

For, in the first hot wave of anger and resentment that swept her, she writhed and tugged for freedom, and then struggled to seize his kris.

But, of course, in his great warrior's hands the girl was power-less—and clever enough to soon realize it and cease resistance.

But as she was being made to step into the *vinta*, she turned on her old mistress and quietly remarked,

"Mother of Chickens, you have been very good to Esa, but now twice you have been very bad. Beware! Esa is more powerful than you know. Beware!"

Time tempers passions, and for the wise sometimes solves

troubles, or points means to solve them.

Esa was wise, wise as are few maids of her age of any race.

And the journey on the Rio Grande, and then up the Degao to Ganta, sufficed to calm her with the realization that each paddle stroke was driving her nearer toward Mt. Apo, well up toward the Moro frontier, close to the frontier she had heard her good Tugan and his warriors were frequently raiding.

She was nearing her old tree-top home.

And out of the calm came resolution that set her subtle

brain seething with plans.

Linta? Ha, she did not fear him. Why should she, while she owned magic more powerful than that of his Kalis and Punditas? He should never wear her. She would deal with him.

Nor did she lose time smoothing her way, for presently she

very humbly asked Ishmael:

"Tell me, great Saligan, Linta is the mightiest of all the Moro chiefs, is he not, has more lands, more women and fiercer Maratuns than any of them?"

"True, girl, the Datu Linta owns no master but Allab."

"And can it be true, what Ina na Manuk said as we were leaving, that the mighty Linta will make me the first favorite of his harem, where already he has so many beautiful women?"

For a moment the old raider sat staring in rude approval of her voluptuous charms, muttering to himself, "He'll be crazy if he don't, and crazier still if he does," and then gruffly answered.

"All depends on you, girl. Yes, he will—if you don't bite and scratch too hard. But look out for Linta. He has little patience. If you deny or vex him, you'll be tied to a *Palosanto* to be eaten by the ants."

All which strengthened Esa's resolution more than it daunt-

ed her.

But it was with a smile and in a very meek tone that she

replied,

"Esa is older than when you took her from Pugsan. She has learned much wisdom. A girl would be a fool who would not be glad of the chance to pleasure a great chief who should so

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elevate her. Why, Saligan, if Linta is the mightiest of the Datus, she whom he makes the first favorite of his harem will be the greatest woman of all your people, will she not?"

"Ha, girl," Ishmael answered, "you have indeed learned wisdom. She who best pleasures Linta rules his Province."

"It is well, Saligan," Esa firmly replied; "if you are right,

so shall you soon see Esa rule."

Thereby proving that she had not been backward in learning one of the first lessons civilization teaches the savage—Deceit.

And hence it naturally followed that it was an altogether coy, almost a shrinking and timid maid, over whose rare beauty Linta eagerly gloated when she was brought before him.

Fast chewed his blackened teeth on a mouthful of betel-nut, bright flamed the great purple scar where once his right ear had been, and trembling were the hands that drew her to him and rudely fondled her.

"A girl in a thousand!" Linta grinned; "and tame; now she

is tame. Ina na Manuk has done well."

Whereupon he summoned his wife, his lawful and once his only wife but now long since the very last of many, and pushing Esa toward her gruffly ordered:

"Take her—and the best, for her the best; she's first."

Then he turned to the waiting Ishmael and growled, "What did she cost? What did Ina na Manuk make you pay?"

"Dear, Mighty One; she made me pay dear-two hundred

and eighty silver pesos; but—"

"Oh! Oh! the old thief! I'll get even with her for that. One day she'll want something we've got, and then she shall pay." And then, shortly adding, "But, Saligan, you've done well. Ina knows Linta can be made to give heavily of what he has for what he badly wants."

On dragged slowly, very, very slowly for him, what Linta was gloating over as likely to be one of the happiest days of

his life.

And while, retired for his afternoon siesta, he lay tossing of

fevered dreams of the joys soon to be his, brilliantly were his women gowning Esa for Linta's hymeneal festival, in the most costly fabrics artistically wrought in most regal Moro mode.

But as for Esa the hours raced away at frightful speed, her

anxiety grew, and grew, and grew.

So crowded was Linta's household that not the ghost of a chance could she see to use Lancona's magic; always was there a throng around the fires where food was being prepared for the evening meal.

She was becoming desperate!

Still, not by the quiver of a finger or the flutter of an eyelid did Esa show her anxiety and desperation when, very shortly after supper, the grinning Linta took her hand and led her behind the hanging mats that walled the nuptial chamber.

What happened within the nuptial chamber?

Ah, precisely what happened there Esa never told, not even the smallest detail.

They were there shut in alone, little Esa and the Mighty Datu Linta.

There were no eye witnesses of the happenings within that nuptial chamber.

But often the ears learn something of happenings that no

eves see.

And that evening those without the chamber heard, what?—the shrill swish of a kris—the soft thud of a blade biting into flesh—the fall of a body—the gurgle of severed arteries! That was all.



CHAPTER XXXVII

WAILING THAT TOLD OF CALAMITY

Upon leaving Datu Dikaya swimming ashore, Morine did not cruise far.

Since none of Telecoco's gente could suspect that he was a bound and gagged prisoner aboard the launch, and must still be believing the purposes of the expedition to be pacific, as Morine had stated them, there was small fear they would attempt to send runners to their next neighbor, Linta.

Moreover, the distance to his rancheria was so great and the going across country so bad that Morine felt safe to lay up along shore for the day, after ordering that a sharp lookout be kept for ascending *vintas* and that any sighted be intercepted and turned back.

Thus through the long, hot day he and his mates lounged and drowsed under their awnings, with only three or four interruptions when *vintas* showed up that must be shooed back down stream.

Meantime, Telecoco, now the Fearful and Very Humble instead of the Feared, had been freed of his gag and generously enough fed, but still remained securely lashed to a locker.

Whenever Morine passed near, to him Telecoco pleaded, but from him received no answer. The longer left in the dark as to his fate, the more quickly would the last of his pride and confidence be broken.

But the moment Morine's back was turned, Telecoco was rumbling ominously as Mt. Apo—prayers to Allah, invocations of Balbal, wheedlings of the alligators and threats to the serpents and murcielagos that, had they been effective, would have made Morine the victim of some terrible fate to make the stoutest heart tremble.

But, somehow, the supposedly doughty Telecoco failed to

connect with any of the horror producers he was supposed by

his people to control.

Perhaps his spiritual powder was wet—or maybe he was just a silly old fakir, although one would certainly waste time trying to make any of his *gente* believe it.

At nightfall, the launch resumed its chug-chug up stream. For hours all were silent, but finally, unable longer to stand

the suspense, Captain Trigg spoke:

"Aren't going to change your mind again tonight, are you, Joe?"

"Not so you'll notice it, Tony," Morine grinned; "Linta's quite another proposition."

"Bully!" cut in Catron; "then I may safely cherish the hope

you're not planning another lecture stunt?"

"You certainly may; with him it will be pretty near a case of shoot first and talk later. He don't seem to me to listen well—perhaps because that right ear of his is no longer doing business at its old stand."

And then, after a short pause, Morine flared, "Think I'm a

d-d fool, hey, Captain?"

"No, no!" Catron hurriedly replied; "about the farthest thing from one I know. Only, honest, while we stood alone in that Moro mob, it did seem to me you had more confidence in the trill of your own bazoo than I'd ever want to risk placing in mine."

"Well, the bazoo won with those gazabos, didn't it?"

"Slick as can a crooked roulette wheel-and my very sin-

cere compliments, Morine; it was simply splendid.

"Thanks, Catron, but just please forget it; all in the day's work, man; all in the day's work, no more. Got to do our work, all of us, and the quicker and cheaper we do it the better, no?"

And adding before either had time to speak, with perhaps just a touch of pride, "Cheap little job, that, really; no wear

and tear on arms; no powder spent!"

"Cheap? Hell!" Catron commented; "no wear and tear! Well, if you want to know, my arms suffered about all the

WAILING THAT TOLD OF CALAMITY

wear and tear they could stand, hugging myself to keep my heart from thumping a hole in my ribs! To me, that was about the *dearest* job I ever had a hand in."

"Well, fellows," Trigg good-naturedly cut in, "that's over, anyhow—and it was all yours. Tony's show ought to be due

tonight, I'm hoping."

"Bet your boots, Tony," Morine replied; "tonight is where you go into action, if there's got to be one. But, of course, I'm bound to try to wriggle through without a scrap if I can. Little show I can, though."

"And less hope on my part you will. But what's the game

tonight, if I may make so bold as to ask?"

"Sure, and it's high time I told you; if I'm not miscalculating our position, the next point on our left opens the mouth of the Degao River."

"Right, old scout, and an hour with the tide will be bring-

ing us mighty close to Linta's show."

"Precisely. Well, we'll stop a scant mile below him. The landing party will be the three of us and forty of our men. Your teniente and the rest will do for the boat. Thirty minutes after we land, the teniente will steam in close opposite the casa grande, the siren singing a song that will make such of them as have not heard one think Balbal's 'comin' fo' to carry 'em home.'

"By that time we should have the boys stretched in a demi lune around the village—pretty wide open work demi lune

it will be, too, for it's a big village.

"Of course, I'm expecting to have surrounded and summoned Linta just before the arrival of the teniente and the launch.

"Not a shot must be fired until we are in position—and none afterwards until I signal, mind. But don't worry, Tony; if Linta don't give us a man's fight this morning, I'll miss my guess."

Sure enough, the next elbow of the river opened the Degao,

and up it they chugged as far as they dared.

And then in no time the landing party was safely ashore and

Morine led Trigg's little brown terriers until opposite the

center of the village.

There he stopped, while Trigg swung the lead of the men to investment of the upper end of the village and Catron drew the rear around its lower end.

It was still an hour to daylight when the line was halted at the edge of the narrow line of huts that, as usual, closely

hugged the river.

Directly in front of Morine, lurching crazily on the rotting poles that supported it, stood the Datu Linta's casa grande.

But while not a single moving figure was in sight and otherwise the place was absolutely still, from the casa grande and, apparently, from all the huts issued sounds of wailing that told of some calamity so terrible that evidently not a single family had escaped it.

What could it be?

Morine was puzzled, and moved.

Another enemy had descended upon these people ahead of him.

And it had brought DEATH on such wholesale scale that

no household had escaped it.

From the low cadence of soft sobs that arose and fell like the soughing of evening breezes through palm fronds, the lamentations presently swelled to the shrillness of the angriest typhoon.

What could it be?

Cholera? Good God!

But no, there had been none on the coast.

What could it mean?



CHAPTER XXXVIII

SLAIN LIKE GOLIATH BY A PUNY HAND

Whatever the dire visitations that had plunged every household of Linta's village in mourning, Morine must proceed to the accomplishment of his mission.

Approaching the casa grande, loudly he hailed, and hailed again and again before any of its grief-stricken inmates paid

any attention to him.

At length, out upon the gallery strode a stalwart figure Morine mistook for his quarry.

"The Sultani of the 'Mergans salutes the mighty Datu Linta," he began.

"But this is not the Datu Linta, 'Mergan," answered a gruff voice; "I'm his faithful Saligan, Ishmael.

"Summon your master, Saligan; tell him the Sultani of the 'Mergans would see him."

"Ah, 'Mergan, if only I could summon him!"

"What do you mean, man?"

"Alas! 'Mergan, Allab has summoned him; the great Linta is now with him."

"Indeed. And many of his people have gone with him, some from every household by the wailing, no?"

"None have gone with Linta, 'Mergan; he passed out alone.

All his people mourn him."

"Ah, I see. And of what did Linta die, Saligan?"

"The mighty Linta was slain by a young Monobo slave girl, 'Mergan; by an ingrate he sought to honor by adding her to his harem women.

"So! And served him d--d well right," Morine muttered to himself, "much obliged, Miss Monobo; ought to simplify my iob a lot."

And then aloud to Ishmael he continued, "And when did this happen, Saligan?"

"Only last evening, 'Mergan, at the hour of retiring."

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"And where is the—ah, the very capable young lady?"

"Expiating her awful crime, 'Mergan, by the judgment of the Kali; buried out there to her neck in the earth, to perish of starvation or the sun."

"Ha! Don't waste much time—or mercy—do your Kalis,

do they?"

"It is for them to interpret the Luwaren and direct the administering of the punishment it provides, 'Mergan."

"Ah, yes, the Luwaren is your law, and so it punishes un-

willing or unfaithful wives?"

Meantime the galleries of the huts were packing with dark, sinister groups, but none had ventured to descend to the ground.

Just then, however, the grim, black shape of the launch, all lights out, rounded close in to shore, and loudly shrieked

its siren!

Instantly a pandemonium of mad terror possessed the villagers that in a moment would have resulted in a serious rush if Morine had not promptly directed Ishmael to order all within their huts, there to stay if they would save their lives.

And so badly was the old Saligan himself startled that he

issued and enforced the order without question.

Called by his chief, up came Tony to take command of the center, instructed under no circumstances to fire unless absolutely forced to it.

Then turning to Ishmael, Morine ordered," I would see the

mighty Linta. Lead me to him."

For a moment the Saligan scowled and shook his head, his brown talons nervously clutching and opening.

Recognizing the crisis, Morine quietly remarked,

"None of that, old vulture; none of that. I know you and you know me. Lead me to Linta, unless you prefer to follow him. And now that Linta is gone your people need you, and I, too, need you."

"You, 'Mergan?"

"Yes, I-but lead, lead!"

Whereupon, moved by mystification more than fear, Ish-

SLAIN LIKE GOLIATH BY A PUNY HAND

mael turned to the casa grande, and he and Morine climbed

its rickety steps.

Dawn was breaking. Pale gray shafts of light stealing between the loosely placed nipa leaves that walled the harem, dimly illumined the interior.

And there in the center of its principal room, wrapped in spotless linen and resting for the last time on his favorite

mat, lay the body of the doughty Linta!

A kris blow through the center of his displaced ear had nearly severed his head!

Strange, indeed, is destiny!

There lay Linta the mighty, the most redoubtable warrior of all the Moro chiefs, slain like Goliath by a puny hand!

And there grouped close around him, dutifully sobbing and tearing their hair, crouched his wives and concubines, to the number of twenty or more, all dutifully if not brokenheartedly mourning their departed lord! While the rest of the great room was an indescribable tangle of howling children, of all ages and hues, who were the seed of Linta's loins!

A glance sufficed Morine; and as he signed to Ishmael to withdraw, he said to himself, "Deeply indebted to that young Monobo lady; have to look her up; nothing short of a medal

ought to be coming to her."

Returned to his men, Morine ordered, "Tony, down there by the river, just behind those huts, is a young Monobo slave girl, buried in the ground to her neck to starve—a little brown Santa Claus who has earned our undying gratitude by bringing death to Linta."

"The little peach!" Trigg interrupted; "but how did she

manage it, Joe?"

"Easy; one swipe of a kris split that funny ear and nearly bit his head off. But move along with a detail of your terriers; it's up to us to save her."

"One man will do, Joe; they're all sticking tight to their

huts as do the leeches to our ankles."

"Bueno, lad, but be careful."

As Trigg signed to one of his men to follow and strode swift-

ly away, Morine addressed Ishmael:

"Old graybeard, you know that Linta has been conspiring with Telecoco against the 'Mergans. It must stop. The Talker to Alligators and Turner of Himself into Serpents is a prisoner on the launch, bound like the slave he is. To Cotabato he goes. There he shall be my slave. I have put Datu Dikaya as ruler over his district. Lucky for Linta he is dead, else he, too, should be my slave."

"Ha, 'Mergan, but you'd have first to take him."

"Sure; but that would be as easy as now to take you, old raider. Only I don't want you. You, better than any one, can control Linta's Maratuns—and you shall, as Datu of all Linta's people."

"But, 'Mergan-"

"No buts about it, Ishmael. You're Datu, or you die; I'll never waste time enslaving you. Stop the marauding of the Maratuns, keep peace in your district, and little will I interfere with you—but when I tell you any practices or people are to be blotted out, it's blot for you, pronto, or yourself be blotted!"

Unblinking, the two stood glaring into each others eyes for some seconds, when Morine, become impatient, sharply exclaimed, "Well, Ishmael, is it yes or no?"

"Yes," simply answered the old Saligan.

"Good," finished Morine, "and I shall trust you until—I find you no longer deserve it."



CHAPTER XXXIX

SAVED BY ESA'S IVORY TEETH

Proceeding to the rescue of the buried Monobo girl who had dealt death to Datu Linta, Captain Tony Trigg and the one man of his command he took with him quickly disappeared from the sight of their mates behind the huts indicated by Morine.

His man was armed with the regulation army rifle and wore a bolo in his belt, but Trigg carried, by preference, the light and handy little .32 calibre Winchester carbine that bumps its quarry harder than a .44, while on his left hip swung his bolo and low on the right dangled a readily handled .45, the flap of whose holster had been liberally amputated—no fool regulation buttoned flaps, that get men killed by clubs, for him; such he left to tenderfeet and doughboys.

Come to the narrow strip of land that lay between the huts and the bank of the Degao, Trigg passed through a clump of platanos that hid him from the launch, and thence prowled

along the stream.

Ha! There she must be!

That little pyramid of black loam, there ahead in the grass, must surely be from the narrow hole dug by order of the Kali for her living grave!

On bounded Trigg.

Yes, there she was, at his feet, buried standing upright, the heavy, wet loam tramped tightly over her shoulders and around the base of her slender, graceful neck!

In mingled wonder and horror, the auburn-haired stalwart

stood gazing—at Esa, for, of course, it was she.

Her beautiful, pale brown face, much lighter of color than are the faces of many Spaniards, was wet with the heavy dew, while through her great masses of raven black hair the dewdrops, lighted by the early morning sun, glistened like gems.

The face was perfectly composed, still.

No lines of hatred distorted it.

No hint of terror shone in the big black oriental eyes.

Here was resignation, the resignation to the inevitable of the savages whose hard lives teach them the folly of long kicking against unavoidable pricks.

But she suffered; that the swelling, writhing muscles of her

neck showed.

Long she looked up at Tony Trigg, while he stood, shocked to inactivity, nodding his auburn curls in commiseration.

Presently she spoke to him, in the soft labials of her native Monobo tongue and in tones sweet and low as those of her dearly-loved *kuteehapee*.

But Tony did not understand her.

Then she tried Moro, but with no better result.

Finally she murmured in Spanish,

"Tu vengas de Dewata, no, Dios Esplendido?" "Thou comest from Dewata, dost thou not, Splendid God?"

Rousing from his stupor, Tony gently answered,

"Don't know your friend Dewata, little one; Joe sent me."
"Oh! Oh! Then you must be a 'Mergan, Son of Fire!"

"Yes, a 'Mergan, right-o, little beauty; and you're near right on your finish; some that know me call me 'son of a gun,'" and Tony grinned good-naturedly.

"Ha! A 'Mergan. Well, 'Mergan, it is good to have seen

you. Now I know what the gods will be like."

Then a swift shadow of weariness swept across the little face, the big eyes lifted again to Tony, and she softly whispered,

"Kill me, 'Mergan. Soon the sun will be terrible, and this

wet, black soil is crushing me. Kill me now, 'Mergan!"

"Kill you, beauty! Well, Tony Trigg will take a hell of a lot of killing himself before anybody gets to hurt you again."

And as, at a sign from him, Tony and his man dropped to their knees and began tearing the heavy loam off her shoulders with their naked hands, the blue eyes were filled with tears.

SAVED BY ESA'S IVORY TEETH

But the two had so worked hardly more than a minute when Esa's voice rose in a shriek.

"Los Moros! 'Mergans, los Moros!"

Seizing their guns, both bounded to their feet.

And none too soon.

Literally leaping upon them were two practically naked Moros, lithe and shifty as panthers, one with a great broad campilan blade poised, the other gripping a short kris of dagger length.

Whence come and wherefore?

Plainly from the nearby huts—doubtless inspired by hatred of dogs of unbelievers who should dare to interfere with the punishment of their Datu's murderess and greedy of what looked such an easy chance to cut them down.

Esa's cry had saved them, at least momentarily.

But there was no shell in the barrel of Tony's carbine and the safety clip was on the soldier's rifle!

Just a miserable, tiny second would suffice to load and cock the carbine or shift the rifle's safety clip, but they lacked it.

Even a half-second would have served to allow Tony to drop carbine and snatch his .45, or the soldier to jerk his bolo, but not even a half-second was theirs.

The Moros were upon them!

On his rifle, raised as for broad-sword defense, the soldier

received the campilan blade.

Smash on the skull of the other Moro fell the barrel of Tony's carbine, but so light was the arm and so short the wrist stroke which was all he had time for that Tony's foe was only momentarily staggered.

Crouching, springing, side-stepping, leaping in and out, but ever pressing deadly close, round Tony the dagger-bearing Moro circled like a mad human whirlwind, playing all the time for the Moro's favorite disemboweling stroke.

Back at him fought Tony the best he could. But that, at

best, was poor.

Hand-to-hand, the Moro has terrible advantage.

Indeed, Tony's best, at the moment, was to keep his body

bent nearly double, to try to save the stomach from the Moro's searching kris, and to hold him off with short jabs and swats with the carbine barrel, into none of which did he have time to put the swing needful to be disabling.

And the soldier was powerless to come to Tony's aid, for round his head the great two-handed campilan blade was

flaming like sheet lightning.

Neither sought to yell for help—doubtless because neither dared to spend his fast failing breath.

Never were tortured souls in Hades more hopeless of escape

from its relentless demons.

On and on they fought over the short grass, often all but stepping on Esa's unprotected head, ever so hard pressed that a reach for their side arms would be fatal.

And fortunate, indeed, it was for Tony that none of the mad swirls of this maelstrom of savage battle carried them away from her.

For he was weakening fast—ripped through the side, slashed deep in the chest, slit through the cheek.

Each fresh spurt of blood from his wounds was taking ghastly

heavy toll of his energies.

Presently he slipped, lost his poise and staggered, wildly swinging his arms to recover himself.

His guard was gone, only for an instant, to be sure, but that instant inevitably fatal.

Nothing but a miracle could save him.

But the miracle materialized.

And, incidentally, it left Tony indebted to Esa for his life.

Shifting position for the spring to take advantage of the opening for a swift disemboweling kris stroke, his enemy's

foot landed close to Esa's face.

Seizing the opportunity, the otherwise utterly helpless maid, hyper-alert of the training of her jungle life, sank her ivorywhite teeth so deeply in the Moro's ankle that he shrieked with the pain of it, and, in tearing himself free, leaped so far aside that Tony had time to recover his guard!

SAVED BY ESA'S IVORY TEETH

But the respite was only momentary; back prodding and

slashing at him came the Moro.

Something must be done. And only some unusual strategy, some defense untaught in any of the drill manuals, could save him. And, happily, his extremity inspired him to pick a winner.

Contriving to give the Moro a jab in the chest with the carbine that shoved him back a couple of steps, Tony dropped to earth on the flat of his back, both feet raised and knees bent.

At his recumbent enemy the Moro sprang, grinning certain victory, but only to receive a violent kick in the pit of the stomach that hurled him ten feet away, crashing into the legs of the other Moro and bowling him over just in the nick of time to succour the soldier.

For an instant before the heavy campilan blade had shorn through the soldier's wrist and rifle stock, leaving one arm handless and the other stockless, and was raising for a finish-

ing stroke!

But Tony's strategy sufficed.

Two snap shots from his .45 piled the pair atop of his bleed-

ing comrade!

And then, notwithstanding the great blood red tropical sun was already blazing aloft of the *platanos*, for Tony the morning faded to black night.





CHAPTER XL A MIRACLE OF A PILLOW

Wherever in the world was he?

Never in his remarkably adventurous life had Tony Trigg

been so puzzled.

Still too weak to lift an eyelid, of the loss of blood that had licked the Moro's kris, nevertheless his brain was clearing.

Wherever in the world was he, and how had he gotten there? Certainly he was at sea, in some small boat, lazily rocking

on low, short swells.

Gently, oh! so very, very gently, his head was rising and sinking, rising and sinking with the lifting and the dipping of the bow.

What could it mean, when the last he could remember was dropping, spent of his wounds, on the bank of the Degao, near to the buried Monobo girl?

Ah! that wonderful little wild girl! He owed her his lifeif, indeed the boat that now bore him was not traversing the

Stvx!

But, presently, his strength slowly returning, feebly his lids

lifted—and then his wonder grew.

Yes, there could be no doubt. There directly aloft of him broad leaves of the platanos were idly swaying—yes, and higher still were the fronds of palms.

However the devil could *platanos* and palms be rising out

of rocking waters?

Well, no matter how they came there. It was enough that they reassured him he was still in the land of the living.

For surely no nourishing plant life is reflected from the murky current of the River of Death!

Queerest thing ever, Tony thought.

Still, evenly, regularly, his head was rising and sinking with the lifting and the dipping of the bow, as the boat rode the low swells and slid into the shallow hollows.

And yet there above him towered the platanos and the palms! But was human head ever so delightfully pillowed? Certainly his had never been.

A downright miracle of a pillow was his.

It was so soft, so very, very soft, and warm, blood warm, just like burning, hungry human flesh, and—yes, he was sure he could not be mistaken—damp, yes, it was damp!

But such a sweet pillow, and so soft he did not mind its

dampness.

And then he began to worry. Perhaps, indeed, he was dead. Whatever but a downy cloud could be so very soft? But the

palms and platanos?

Why, the Mohammedans believe the abode of their Allah is beside palm-bordered Celestial Pools; if such their Heaven, why not his?

Dead? Yes, he must be dead.

Surely none but the waves of Celestial Pools could lift and

dip so very gently.

Ah! but what was that? Something tenderly brushed his brow, paused and lightly toyed with his auburn curls, toyed so lightly it could be nothing but a celestial zephyr.

But no, look, he must look. Were not those tiny brown fingers that appeared for an instant before his eyes, and then

were gone?

Ha! that was better. Angels are white, not brown—sport wings, not fingers!

But he must look!

And when, after a mighty effort, he managed to turn his head, it was to lay his cheek upon the other of a pair of naked, moist breasts, so nearly over the heart that its strong throbs told him he was listening to warmly pulsing life!

Ha! that was the best of all; that would do. Only the listening living can hear pulsing life!

Someone was holding him, some woman pillowing his head upon her bosom!

Could it be his adored Ruth? Of course. Who else could so

A MIRACLE OF A PILLOW

tenderly mother him? And yet the fingers were brown, and how had he gotten back to Cotabato?

But the mental strain and the moving of his head had been too much for him, and again the light faded and left all the world dark to Tony Trigg.





CHAPTER XLI

THE SON OF FIRE

Shortly the dull-red Mindanao sun would sink into the farther of the rice paddys that had been Datu Linta's.

Acting Governor Joseph Morine had just finished a final conference with the dead Datu's head Saligan, now by Mor-

ine's decree become the Datu Ishmael.

For Morine it had been a very anxious as well as a busy day, for he loved the rollicking, devil-may-care Tony Trigg. The red blood that makes eager, stubborn battlers such as were they, pulses from hearts that rarely bestow any but abiding affections. Win them once, and you've got them for all time, so they receive a fair measure of the affection they give and a fidelity equal to theirs. But mind you don't give short measure, or trifle!

Throughout the day, Tony's life-light had been flickering

feebly, all but out.

At sound of the two pistol shots that had dispatched the Moros, Morine had raced to Tony with a detail of men.

The soldier was past help. From the artery of his severed

wrist, the last drops of his life were ebbing.

Tony lay unconscious, blood streaming from his side and

chest, his cheek badly slashed.

As Morine bent over him and thumbed his pulse, a soft voice almost under his feet lisped, "Sacame, 'Mergan! Sacame pronto!

"Puedo Salvarle!" "Pull me out, 'Mergan! Pull me out

quick! I can save him!"

Mindful only of Tony, he had all but stepped on the buried

Monobo girl, Datu Linta's slayer.

For some moments Morine stood looking down in wonder and pity at the beautiful brown face, now splashed with Tony's blood.

Then he gravely smiled and said, "Well, little one, I owe

you freedom, anyway—and a lot more," and set his men loosening with their bayonets the heavy black loam that entombed her, himself turning to Tony.

But directly again the girl spoke, "Quick, 'Mergan, make

them work quick; I can save him."

Doubtful, but humoring her, Morine ordered his men to hustle, and then said in English, "Ah, ha! you little pagan; you think you have some cunning heathen medico tricks up—up where your sleeve ought to be. Perhaps; let's see," adding in Spanish, "What's your name, and why do you think you can save him?"

"Esa is a medicine woman," she simply replied.

"Well, Miss Esa, 'medicine baby' would describe you better, and you must have begun your medical studies at your mother's breast at that if you really know anything about it. But God knows we need you, for poor Tony looks past saving."

"Fetch water, fire and green bamboo, 'Mergan," she ordered. "Right-o, Miss Medico," he answered; and when they arrived, again she sharply ordered, "Fill the bamboo with water and put it in the fire to boil—and you wash his wounds,

'Mergan."

"Well, I'll be d--d," Morine commented; "regular little colonel, all but the eagles and the sword belt! Wonder whether she's a grad. of West Point, Sandhurst or St. Cyr!" but got busy fast enough.

But when finally they lifted her from the muck of her living tomb, O pity of pities! nor hand nor foot could the brave

little one lift!

"Lay me beside the Son of Fire," she ordered.

"Lay you where?" Morine asked.

"Beside bim," fixing her big almond eyes on Tony.

"Oh, I see; that's it. Well, if you only knew it, Son of a .45 would suit him better, and God grant he comes around to use one again."

Hard she struggled, but the best she could manage was to

lay her tiny fingers on Tony's great hand.

"Now, 'Mergan," she called, "open my waist cloth and you

will find medicine. Quick! But quick!"

Springing at her will, Morine lifted several tiny packets wrapped in leaves, when she cried, "That one; that flat one. Open, and rub the balsam on his wounds."

And while he was so engaged, yet again she ordered, "Your men; make one put half the herb in that round packet in the

hot water."

Shortly, under the healing influence of the balsam, blood

flow stopped.

And when, half an hour later, after some of the cooled potion from the bamboo tube had been trickled down Tony's throat and color began to show in his face and his pulse to strengthen, Morine remarked:

"Well, Miss Esa, you're a brick! But at which the best brick I can't decide. Don't know whether to recommend you to the General for a colonelcy in the Constabulary or for

Chief of the Department Medical Corps!"

But since the observation was in English, Esa remained

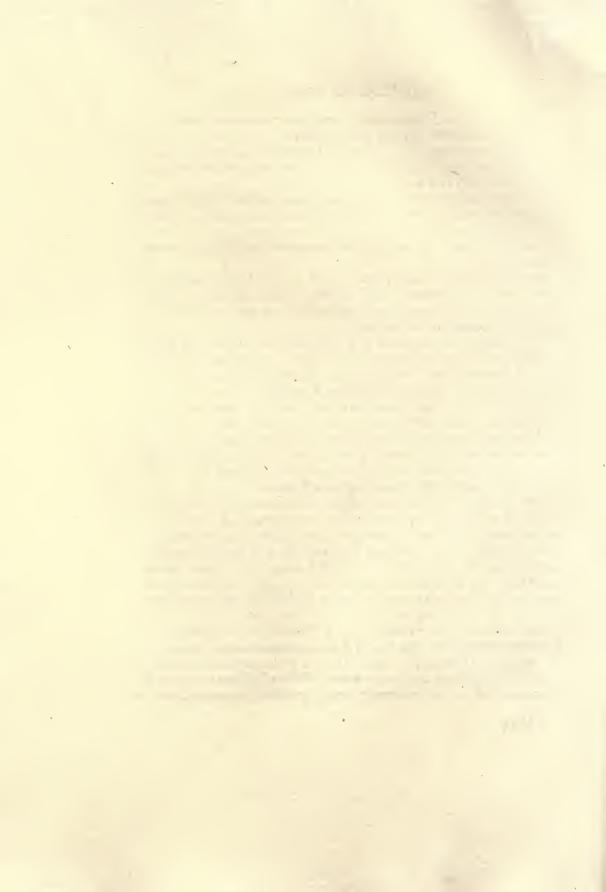
ignorant of the compliment.

Meantime, circulation returning to her long-prisoned limbs, Esa began to regain control of them, but still she, too, had to be carried when Tony was taken on a stretcher into the shade

of platanos and palms abreast of the launch.

And there beside him throughout the livelong day she had reclined, pillowing his head on her breast, giving him of her potion now and then, brushing away the flies and thinkingah, none but Dewata himself could tell the mad thoughts seething in the brain of this youthful adept in His service, or whether they had been inspired entirely by Tony's auburn curls or by the desperate battle in which she had seen him fall victor.

Nor respecting their safety had Morine been taking any chances; fearful that some of Linta's Maratuns might seek to revenge themselves upon the pair responsible for the death of the Datu and two of their fellow-believers, around them all day he maintained a heavy guard of constabulary.





CHAPTER XLII

THE MEETING OF ESA AND RUTH

When, just at sundown of the day of Tony's battle on the bank of the Degao, Morine headed his launch for Cotabato,

he was very content with himself.

The conspiring of the Datus had received a heavy jolt, sufficient to lighten his anxieties respecting them for the present. Telecoco, the Talker to Alligators, remained below bound to a locker; Linta, he of the displaced ear, was now also below—below sod, in safe storage where he could bother nobody and nobody but Balbal could bother him.

And Tony was resting easily out there under the awning in

the bow, his curls still pillowed on Esa's breast.

It really seemed that the girl had saved him, brought him back from the edge of the grave. Her balsams had worked so magically that no inflammation of the wounds had developed, and her herb potion was holding down his temperature effectively. He had regained consciousness, but now was sleeping quietly.

Morine and Catron marvelled. Old campaigners as they were, they had never seen the like of it. Here was crude surgery that beat all the epauletted ethical sawbones. With the

best of them, Tony would now be tossing with fever.

But Morine was worrying as well as marvelling at the moment.

"Catron, if it had not been downright inhuman, I'd have

left that Monobo girl behind."

"But why, Joe? You certainly owe her the pacification of

Linta and we all owe her the saving of Tony's life."

"Simply because it strikes me she spells a certain legacy of trouble for Tony, and very possibly of danger for Ruth Snell."

"Shoo; nonsense," answered the less-observing Catron. "But look at her, man, out there still holding his head. She's

not left him a second since we dug her out of her grave. She's mad about him. Our big blond men are ever deadly fascinating to these dusky daughters of the Islands; and when one battles for any of them grandly as did he for her—why, good God, man, don't you realize that she's his slave for life? Many are the trifling civilized women who'd be forgetting it and be playing all sorts of false tricks in a few months, but a savage girl, never."

"Well, I must say there's a lot of sense in what you say,

but—"

"Sense, Catron! It's law, a downright law, I tell you. And it's one of the anomalies of life, if you ask me. Think of it. The native tongue of that Monobo girl holds no words that signify either Love or Fidelity, as do none of the languages of any of the primitive races, and yet, by the Eternal, you'll find more abiding love and fidelity among savage than among civilized women.

"Love! That girl Esa don't know what love means. She just wants a man, and when she gets him she wants she d--d well sticks. And for any she don't want who try to get gay with her, it's mind your eye, and mind it a-plenty, take my word.

"Why, Linta is not the first lover's scalp that youngster has literally hung in her belt. Today Ishmael told me she's the one who poisoned old Wa-Tu, after he won her off Ina na Manuk in a cock fight and tried to elevate her to the queenship of his harem."

"You don't mean it!" Catron cried in astonishment.

"But I do. She's a very remarkable girl, for a pagan. Ishmael tells me she's the daughter of the Lukus and Ingorandy of one of the Monobo clans, wised by her father in all their tribal lore, and shrewd old Ina na Manuk has coached her in the Koran and the Luwaren until she's fit to trot the Punditas and Kalis an intellectual heat—doubtless did it to add to her value, make her fetch a bigger price from some rich sporter of a harem. And Ishmael says Ina na Manuk soaked Linta a-plenty."

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"Why, if you're right all round," Catron commented, "she's

a positive danger. What'll you do with her?"

"Well, I think I'll take her to my quarters, and then put in my spare time hoping she don't poison me for keeping her from constant attendance on Tony."

"But why don't you take the poison away from her?"

"Because I can't tell which is which of the contents of that medicine bag she wears in her waist cloth, and she seems to be as great at curing as at killing. And what's the use, anyway, when there's always a bolo handy!"

It was about an hour after sunrise, just as the launch was rounding to at Cotabato, that Tony roused, strengthened by

his sleep, but still very weak.

The tired girl was drowsing, her beautiful face bent low over his, a cool, brown hand resting lightly on his forehead.

Roused by his slight movement, Esa awakened, and gazed anxiously down into the big sky-blue eyes, keen as a mother after a night of care over a suffering child.

The blue eyes smiled up at her and Tony whispered,

"So? It's you that's been on guard. Gracias, gordita,— Thanks, little plump one."

Instantly the great almond eyes, glistening like black dia-

monds, were dancing with joy, and she answered:

"Safe! You'll live, Son of Fire; I see it in your eyes. But don't talk."

Hurrying ashore and learning that the post surgeon was down of a bad fever, Morine called to Catron, "Captain, take a detail of men and see Tony safely in hospital, and tell the hospital steward to do nothing but give him the lightest nourishment, not to monkey with his wounds, for these pagan dressings are doing the healing trick too well to be shifted."

But when he directed Esa to follow him, for a time it seemed that nothing short of force would tear her from Tony. And when he persisted, wildly the black eyes roved, as if in search of some weapon. Indeed, only was she persuaded to come

with him when he assured her that shortly she would again

see her patient.

Rapidly he marched to the quarters of Ruth Snell, the next set beyond his own, to break to her the news of Tony's injury.

Like all tropic dwellers, she was up with the sun, and now

seated on the gallery, enjoying the cool morning breeze.

As he approached, the tall, lean figure rose and her big, violet eyes smiled calmly down at him as she greeted:

"Ah, so you are safely returned from your expedition, Gov-

ernor?"

"Good morning, Miss Snell," Morine answered; "Back, yes, but Tony—"

"What, is Captain Trigg injured?" she quietly interrupted;

"not seriously, I trust."

Shivering a bit at her cool self-possession, he replied, "No, he's not in a serious condition now, Miss Snell. He had the closest call ever, but now I think he is out of danger, thanks to the heathen surgery of this pagan slave girl."

"A pagan slave girl! What can she know of the art of heal-

ing?

"Well, not much, perhaps, but enough to save a man from wounds that would have overtaxed the best skill of most sur-

geons, in my opinion."

"Upon my word. That is indeed remarkable," and Ruth shifted her steady gaze to Esa, who stood before her in all the glory of exquisitely rounded shoulders, impudently pouting breasts and swelling limbs, naked but for the short tunic that scarcely reached her knees, black blotches of Tony's

blood still dotting her face and arms.

Just as steadily Esa gazed up at Ruth, her big almond eyes narrowed with suspicion, wondering what she could be to Tony, for already Esa had come to recognize the name his friends gave him. But presently her eyes opened and softened—of the subtle deduction she was quick to draw that no woman to whom Tony meant anything could hear of his hurts and stay so cold and still.

THE MEETING OF ESA AND RUTH

Typical products of The Stone Age and The Gold Age confronted each other.

The passionless daughter of the snows looked down upon

her hot-blooded sister of the jungle!

The one the victim of her father's brutal greed, the other the very best her father's savage solicitude could make her! And how Nature itself had been kinder to Esa than to Ruth! Above, on the gallery, stood Ruth, immaculate in a beautiful gown of some soft, clinging white stuff, a blue ribbon at her throat, her coldly beautiful face and head framed in great masses of lovely golden hair—but flat and drearily unaccentuated of figure as a rice paddy.

Below, on the ground, stood Esa, nigh naked, dirty, her wild black locks shockingly tousled, but owning a riotous wealth of beauty of face and body that would make even the Sphinx turn its head in intoxicated contemplation of her every

graceful movement.

"Such a distressingly dirty little heathen!" Ruth presently

observed.

"Yes, but you see she's not taken the time to fuss with her toilet since Tony was hurt yesterday morning. Hasn't left his side for an instant, until just now, since sunup yesterday."

"Indeed; quite a remarkable little person, isn't she?"

"Well, I fancy you'll be sure of it when you come to learn her story, but I've not time for that now. And, by the way, I suppose you'll go directly up to Tony at the hospital?"

"Why, no, Governor, I don't see how I can, until the afternoon. You see it's time for my morning class," Ruth indifferently answered; "I suppose the hospital steward will be looking after him."

Whereupon Morine turned and strode nervously toward

his quarters, angrily muttering to himself:

"Jesus, look up that Snell girl's family tree and I'll bet you'll find it loaded with icicles! She frappés me from the knees up every time I get near her. Poor Tony! Cold-decked in the chilliest she freeze-out game I ever saw! How in hell can he stand it?"

Just as they reached his quarters, he laid his hand gently on Esa's tousled head and gravely murmured, "Little woman, you're worth a million of her; in a race with her for any real man, my money would go on you, but I'm far from sure you've done Tony a good turn by saving him."

Having consigned Esa to the care of his native servants, the dog-tired Governor dropped into a long lounge chair for

a doze, but before closing his eyes he growled:

"Beats hell that the higher civilization rarely manages to produce more than two types of women—one with so few nerves they're impossible, the other with more nerves than it's ever comfortable to live with!"



CHAPTER XLIII

ESA WANTS THE SON OF FIRE

When, shortly before tiffin, Morine took Esa, now neatly habited as a Moro girl, up to the hospital, to administer to Tony another dose of her marvellous potion, he found the patient resting easily.

Immediately they arrived and before Morine had time to

speak, Tony anxiously asked:

'But Ruth, have you not told Ruth?"

"Sure, Tony; the first thing this morning, while you were being carried up here."

"My God, but she must have the fever; she has not been up

to see me."

"On the contrary, Tony, she's well; never better," answered Morine, with a shadow of a cynical smile.

"Strange, then, that she does not come to me. Do you know

why, Joe?"

"Why, Tony, she said it was the hour for her class and she'd—"

"Well, I'll be d--d! Her class? And that's keeping her from me, when I'm brought in about the most finished article of human hash that Moro had time to turn me into!"

And then, turning his head feebly and looking up at Esa, he added, "Well, you're here, my lovely little doctor, and I guess it's up to me to thank you that I am here. Isn't that right, Joe?"

"Absolutely right, my boy," answered Morine; "it would have been The Dead March and a volley across a grave for

you but for this little pagan."

"Just as I thought; and do you know, Joe, that makes the second time she's saved my life; for in the fight I lost my balance, and my guard with it, but when the Moro threw a foot back for a spring to finish me, that girl's teeth nipped his ankle so hard that I had time to recover my guard."

"Well, well, Tony," responded Morine, "that leaves it horse and horse between you and the girl, for you certainly saved her life as much as she saved yours. Had the Moro finished you, he surely would have killed her. So forget it; just d--d well forget it."

Again Tony's eyes lifted to Esa, who throughout the conversation had been gazing at him fixedly, and as he looked at her his face lighted with a sense of gratitude that was so nearly merged into actual tenderness that in an instant the girl's face was all aglow with joy and she dropped on her knees beside him and seized his hand and pressed it to her breast.

Then, looking up at Morine, she said, "Saved; he's saved; Esa told you, 'Mergan, she'd save him."

"Yes, little one," Morine answered, "you have certainly made your word good most handsomely. Pero olivdale chica—forget it, little one. He saved you and you saved him, so you're quits, you're even, no?"

"Ah, yes, 'Mergan; the Son of Fire saved Esa. Ha, you should have seen how he fought! Forget it, 'Mergan? Perhaps Esa may forget it when she's dead, but not before. But for Esa he would be dead—the alligators would be eating him—that makes him Esa's. Esa wants the Son of Fire. No one can take him from Esa. Esa is his slave. Esa will kill for him—will kill herself if he orders it."

The tones of Esa's voice as she lisped her thought in broken Spanish, were low and sweet and musical as ever, but they rung with a firmness that spelled such finality of purpose that Morine remarked to Tony in English:

"Here's a big order for you, my boy, a heavy responsibility. I hope you will deal with it justly and discreetly. Doubtless you will agree it would be best that she be sent directly to another station."

"Why, Joe, I suppose you're right. But not just now, old boy, please." Adding, with a faint flicker of a smile, "You see, maybe she's not quite finished my cure yet, and perhaps

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our sawbones would not pull me through so quickly and

surely."

"Right about the cure and sawbones; but if she stays, mind she don't finish by killing. Pardon, old chap, but you're not forgetting you've invited Miss Snell to sit into your game of life."

"Sure, Joe; no fear; I'm not likely to be forgetting that."

Call for tiffin had sounded, and as Morine walked out of the ward, leaving the youthful surgeon with her patient, he grumbled to himself, "Fear! By the Eternal, there is no end of fear—fear for the life of Ruth Snell or of Tony, and probably for them both. But that's their game."

When, an hour later, Ruth Snell entered the ward, Tony

was dozing lightly and Esa sat crouched beside his cot.

At Ruth's approach, he awakened, and his eyes so lighted with the delight of seeing his fiancée that it brought a fierce scowl on Esa's face and set her trembling.

And when, after a thoroughly kindly but altogether undemonstrative greeting, Ruth reached out to smooth his pillow, up sprang Esa and hissed through shut teeth:

"De jele! Es mio, el!" "Let him alone! He is mine!"

After looking at her a moment in quiet surprise, Ruth said: "But I don't quite understand, Tony; what does this little savage mean?"

"Why, Ruth, you see she's a little Monobo slave girl, con-

demned to die by the Kali.

"She had killed the Datu Linta, to escape being forced to life in his harem, and had been buried to her neck in the

ground to starve or die of the sun.

"Joe sent me to rescue her, and while digging her out we were jumped by Moros and nearly done for. She's really a wonderful little thing, and the potion and balsams she directed Joe how to make and use have certainly pulled me through. And," glancing over at Esa with an indulgent smile, "she seems to have the usual professional jealousy of interference with her patient."

"Ah, I see; that explains it," replied Ruth, "but really she

looks so like a little tigress at bay in defence of her young

that I was almost frightened."

"Nothing to be afraid about, dear," Tony reassured her. "You know the government owes her a lot for removing Datu Linta from the trouble zone, and Joe swears I owe her my life; and I've been thinking, Ruth, darling, that perhaps you might take her into your school. Plainly we cannot send her back among the Moros, for that would be sending her to cer-

tain death at their hands."

"Why, certainly I'll do that, Tony. And the Governor seems to think she's such a very unusual girl that I think I should even like to do more for her. I shall want to have her under observation for a few days, of course, first; but, I think I should like to adopt her—to make a prolonged and persistent effort to see what can be done, what progress can be made in the civilization of a virtually wild pagan. Indeed, for some time I have had such a test in mind, and have only been waiting to find an interesting subject for the test."

"Why, Ruth, the actual adoption of any savage girl would

be rather a bold experiment, would it not?"

"Yes, Tony, undoubtedly; but you know my heart is in this work and I am profoundly interested to try to learn just what we may expect to accomplish toward civilizing the young of the wild tribes as well as of the Moros, and this can only be done by prolonged control and influence of a chosen subject."

"Well, darling, in any event you should think it over carefully before deciding, but undoubtedly we owe her protec-

tion.'

Then, turning to Esa, Tony said, "Esa, you will go with this kind lady and will always do just what she says. She will teach you to talk as we 'Mergans talk, and will teach you to read as you have seen the Kalis and Punditas read their language."

A bright smile lighted Esa's face as she answered, "But Esa can read the Moro's writing and Esa knows the Koran and

the Luwaren; Ina na Manuk taught her."

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"The deuce you do, girl," Tony answered; "that should help you to very quickly learn our tongue. And if you are always careful to do just what this lady says, she will be very kind to you and may teach you more."

"Esa will try, Esa knows all the magic of her people, much of that of the Moros, and she would know the magic of the

'Mergans."

"Magic, child?" interposed Ruth; "what do you mean?"
"Why the wonderful writing magic by which you put down

your thoughts without speaking.

Ruth's face brightened with pleasure and she said to Tony: "Ah, dear, here's the very child I've been seeking; here seems to be intelligence and much more than usual willingness to learn.

"But tell me, Tony, you must have suffered terribly of these

awful wounds."

"Why, no, Ruth, dear; scarcely any. The fact is, the Moro's kris bled me so heavily I just faded away into the happy land of forgetfulness; and Esa's medicines have so well kept down inflammation and fever that since I regained consciousness I've suffered little—except of the burning desire to see you, darling. I sort of thought you would run to me as soon as you heard I was brought in hurt. But I suppose that's unreasonable of me—expecting too much."

But thinly veiled as was his mild chiding, it had no moving effect on the lady of the snows, who had not so much as laid a cool hand on his brow or even permitted her face to express a shadow of concern—while all the time the knitted brow, the nervously playing nostrils and the fiercely intent eyes of the little brown lady of the jungle that never shifted from Tony's face, bespoke a heart consumed with anxiety and overflow-

ing with love.

It was in the most casual tones that Ruth replied:

"Expecting too much? Why certainly not, Tony. Had there been any pressing necessity, I should have come straightway. But first, of course, is my duty to my pupils, and time was coming for my morning class when the Governor brought me

the news. And then I reasoned that since, after all, the care of wounds is best left to those trained and experienced in their scientific treatment, and that you were safely settled in the hospital under the observation and care of its staff, you would not be needing me particularly, anyway."

"Oh! And so you reasoned all that, did you, dear? Impulse, no mandate of your heart, ever gets the better of that reason-

ing machinery of yours, does it?"

"Why, certainly I hope not, my boy. How can any soundthinking being become the victim of impulse? Giving way to impulse commits one to indiscretions. Order and organization are never enjoyed by such as give way to impulses.

Only those who reason may so profit themselves."

"Well, dear," Tony ruefully replied, "you may be right—that may be the right view of life from your perch on Venus or Jupiter, from whichever of the remoter planets you're looking down from. But, personally, I'd trust one good, healthy, athletic impulse to jump me up more joy than any thousand reasons and all the order and organization they might produce."

"Ah, there you go again, you great, raw caveman," Ruth indulgently smiled. "You're incorrigible. But still your impulses I can trust, for I'm sure you'll never have a bad one."

"Ha! I'm not so sure of that," Tony grinned. "I'm suffering all the time from one impulse you'd never approve of, that may get the best of me any time—once I'm up and around again."

"And what's that, boy, pray?"

"Nothing less than the impulse to seize, and kiss and crush

you, sweetheart, no less."

"Approve it? No, Tony, I could not, for that's about the last of the stupid extravagances of impulse. Surely two people may esteem and—ah, be fond of each other—without so exhausting themselves."

"Exhausting themselves! Well, Ruth, you see you never tried that form of hard labor, so maybe you're wrong, maybe you don't know. As for me, I'd back myself to take the heav-

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iest punishment of that sort through a dozen rounds before I was counted out."

And as Ruth, after pleading the call of her duties, signed to Esa to follow her and turned to leave the ward, hot little brown fingers crushed his hand and the great love beaming from a pair of almond eyes left him no doubt where such impulses might be indulged by him without offense—or stint.

And as the little brown lady of the jungle whirled and swiftly followed the tall white lady of the snows, Tony shut his

eyes and bit—his own lip.





CHAPTER XLIV

STRANGE WOMEN, THESE 'MERGANS

Her removal from the household of Governor Morine to that of Ruth was little to Esa's liking. But the Son of Fire had ordered it. *Basta!* Enough. His will was hers.

For a time it was not so very hard, so long as she was permitted to retain the loose and scant Moro costume to which

she had become fairly accustomed.

But when after a few weeks, indeed before Tony had sufficiently recovered from his wounds to be up and around long, Esa's quick intelligence and eagerness to learn had actually carried her quite to the lead of all Ruth's scholars, and finally decided Ruth to put in practice her plan to adopt the girl, then came serious trials.

First the dreadful 'Mergan clothes!

How close and hot they were, and how the long skirts hampered the freedom of limbs that had known little more restraint than those of a deer, and what terrors were the stockings, and how the shoes pinched!

And then the stiffing, hot bed she was put into! How she hated it! But that she could easily beat—by quietly slipping out of it to a mat on the floor shortly after the night's pray-

ers were said and the lights out.

Only when she was caught, as now and then she was by the inconsiderate straying in of a vagrant moonbeam before Ruth had dropped asleep, then a thin, white-clad figure little thicker than the meager stalk of a cana brava would come across to chide her, and back into her sweat box she would have to go.

But worst of all were the formalities of eating, the sitting stiffly on a high chair, when all but fools and the 'Mergans well know that it's a thousand times more comfortable to eat while squatted or reclining on a nice cool mat! And the silly implements the 'Mergans use to feed themselves, uncontent

with the far defter fingers and generous palms by use of which one may feast to surfeit in half the time!

At all this or the half of it, Esa would have rebelled for sure

but for two considerations:

First, that here she was farther than ever from her tree-top home at the foot of Mt. Apo, and now she well knew, since the slaying of Linta, in none of the intervening Moro villages or rancherias could she find asylum safe from the old raider, Ishmael.

And, second, that here, just here among the 'Mergans in Cotabato, she was near to the Son of Fire, the one thing in all the world she loved better than her free, wild life in the jungle.

He, the Son of Fire, had bid her do all the white lady ordered. Did she less, hers might be a punishment she could never stand—he would certainly be angry with her. And that would kill Esa. Esa wanted him, and one does not get those one makes angry. Ah, yes, she must do what she was told, just the same as a mandate of *Dewata* brought to Usup by *Toomulkun* and interpreted by Usup to her.

In the school she delighted. It was his tongue she was learning to speak—and the magic by which you put it down on paper, only, by Munowog's big black eggs, would she ever

live long enough to learn that? She was afraid not.

But greatest of all her delights were the evenings Tony was

now spending at their house.

Ah, what a joy to see the splendid tall figure extended in one of their long lounge chairs and the flaming curls resting on its pillow, the curls and the beautiful head they covered that for

a whole day and night had not left her breast!

Father of Alligators, but might he not send all his ugly brood, to the last one, to catch and devour Esa, and welcome, so she might for just one hot, sweet-scented jungle night clasp her arms around the neck that held that splendid, flaming head, when he should again be well and very strong and should be looking down into her eyes as up into her eyes his eyes had looked when the 'Mergan chief had taken her to see him in the sick house, where they had carried him!

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One such glorious night with the Son of Fire! Ah! Basta! That would do. Then Esa could die happy!

But, nevertheless, great as was her joy of his visits, always did they stir in her anxieties—that finally crystallized into a

terrible conviction.

That dreadful tongue of theirs! Would she never learn to understand it. What were they saying? They talked so much, and the Son of Fire always so earnestly. Yes, and often his eyes lighted while he was looking at the white lady as they did when he looked up at her from his cot in the hospital.

How about that? Did he think so very much of her? No, it could not be, else she would be looking at him in the same

way and always wanting to touch him.

And yet she never did either.

What was she, anyway? Ha! Perhaps just a sort of human vine without a grip, the sort that hangs without ever taking hold.

Strange women must be these 'Mergans.

Fancy any woman in all the world who could receive such a look from the Son of Fire and not want to touch him!

It must be something else he cares a great deal about of

which he talks to her.

Perhaps it was about the school, or, maybe, about her, Esa. But no. That could not be, for since he had come out of the sick house, while always gentle with her, never had he so looked at Esa again.

Why not?

Ah! Now that he is so looking at the white woman it must mean that the Son of Fire wants her!

But she, the white woman, cannot want him, for she never so looks at him, but perhaps that is because white women do not show their wants in their faces.

This is simply terrible. Esa must be very, very careful, just like she was stalking a deer in the jungle, to get near enough to kill it with one of her blow-gun darts.

And that white woman had best take care. The Son of Fire should never be for her.

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But shrewd as were most of the jungle girl's deductions, on this particular evening she was altogether wide of the mark on the actual subject of the conversation of Ruth and Tony.

They were talking of the school problem in general and of the many always difficult and often weirdly absurd situations it developed.

In fact, Ruth was very highly praising Esa, but alluded to

her so indirectly that Esa did not realize it.

"Tony," Ruth said, "I had a very bad morning at the school—and the truth is you came very near losing your Ruth."

"Why, however was that?"

"Well, you see I asked the Governor to keep it from you so I might tell you myself. But had you been well, I should have sent someone on a run to fetch you to deal with that big Moro brute, Tumog."

"But for God's sake what happened, sweetheart?"

"Well, to begin, you must know that the few schools in the outside districts have been getting on badly. The American teachers, like myself, are totally ignorant of the Moro dialects, and the few Hindus and Armenians so employed know little Moro and are wholly unfitted by experience or temper to teach wild children.

"At first, the Datus and privileged class were induced to send many of their children to school, but what was the result? Their utter inability to understand what their teachers were driving at so balked and vexed the teachers that they began violently beating them. Fancy it; beating children who had never known the weight of a finger from their parents, and for no cause but the teacher's ignorance of the pupil's tongue!

"Naturally, all such children were withdrawn from the schools, leaving as their only pupils a few children of the

Moro masses and of their slaves.

"And to remedy this situation, the best the Governor could do has been to persuade the Datus that, if their children do not profit by attending our schools, in another generation the lower class of their own people and their slaves must cer-

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tainly be superior to them, and that, hence, since they will not let their children go to the local schools, their only chance to benefit them is to send them here to Cotabato, where, under the Governor's supervision, he can guarantee that there shall be no bodily punishment except for gross misbehavior or violence."

"Yes, I've heard of it," interposed Tony; "and that's had the result to bring into your school a lot of the children of the Datus that even includes a few grown men of twenty and

thirty."

"Precisely; and it is just this which has more than doubled the difficulties of my situation, because the grown and halfgrown are both slower to learn and harder to discipline."

"Sure; it's a mistake; yes, more, it's a shame and an outrage to expect any woman teacher to receive and have to handle as pupils grown Moro boys; and it's even a danger, for such young men by the custom of generations at all times wear their arms."

"Quite so; and today I had to confront such an emergency

that was near costing me my life."

"Heavens, dear, you don't mean it! You should have sent

for me."

"But, first, Tony, there was no time, and, secondly, you're far too weak to be excited or have your strength taxed in such an emergency."

"But what was it? Tell me, dear; what happened?"

"Well, altogether the most unruly of my lot is a big, husky youth of twenty, Tumog, the son of the Datu Dikaya. From the first he has defied all class discipline and has constantly been vexing me by disturbances of class routine. And when I've had the boy interpreter I'm using advise him that he must do as he is told or leave the school, he has answered that he will not leave the school and will do as he pleases.

"All but Tumog and one other I had managed to persuade to leave their arms off when coming to school, and these two, in order to hold them under close observation, I had been

placing in the front row near to my desk.

"For the last two days the pair have been so ugly that this morning I determined to rid myself of them, never dreaming of actual violence.

"But when, through my interpreter, I ordered them to leave the school and never to return to it, up sprang Tumog, drawing his kris and his eyes glaring murder."

"Great God, you don't mean it!"

"And there's no doubt I owe my life to your little brown doctor. It is not often one gets such definite reward, and never so early, of one's strivings to do good for others.

"But I'm now convinced my decision to adopt that young

girl was no less than an inspiration from God.

"Of course, from day to day Esa has seen my difficulties with Tumog and has heard his insolent and almost threatening answers. And it was her vigilance and bravery that saved me.

"Seated immediately behind the two armed youths, no more was Tumog on his feet and lifting his kris for a spring at me, than Esa snatched the kris from the waist cloth of his companion and struck him. But the emergency was so great, and it all had to be done so quickly that while the weight of her blow stunned him, it was only a glancing stroke that sheared off a half handbreadth of his scalp."

"Heavens, how fortunate! Thank God! Now we both owe her our lives. That little savage is just a wonder, no less. And you know, darling, I've been thinking lately that if you manage to make her like you, no danger can ever reach you

save over her dead body."

"Yes, Tony, I think you are right. But Esa has such a frightfully uncontrollable temper that when anything rouses

her she sees nothing but red and stops at nothing.

"Why, do you know it took all my influence to stop her from finishing Tumog right there. She was raising her kris to chop his head off when I sprang at her and pushed her back, at which she bounded forward, gave me a shove that sent me reeling and sprang after me as if to attack me. But as she got the look of utter terror that must have been in my

STRANGE WOMEN, THESE 'MERGANS

face, Esa laughed wildly and turned and stood over her vic-

tim, ready to deal with him.

"I then managed to control her by telling her I relied on her to stand guard over him until I could get help, but that she must not strike him unless he tried to rise.

"Then I rushed a messenger over to headquarters, and soon the Governor was with me and had Tumog dragged away."

"And what has Joe done with that fellow Tumog?"

"Well, you see the affair did not reach an actual attack on me; there was only the threat of it, and this afternoon when I came back from the school I saw Tumog in leg chains under guard with the other grass cutters, working on the streets. As I passed him, he gave me an ugly glance that frightened me—but doubtless the Governor will deal with him prudently."

"No fear; he is sure to; and I also, you can depend, will have

a sharp eye on him."





CHAPTER XLV A PACIFIC CONQUEST

A few days actually sufficed.

But since at all tasks he undertook Governor Morine's most distinguishing trait was thoroughness, the process of humbling the pride of the Datu Telecoco was extended over several weeks.

The lesson must sink so deep that there should remain no chance of its being forgotten.

And throughout this period, for probably the first and last time in his life, the Talker to Alligators and Turner of Himself into Serpents profoundly regretted the exuberant fertility of the soil and the riotous plant growth of his native valley.

At his home among his people, the miraculously fast-growing of the crops the generous black loam of the valley produced, meant the wearying of the backs and the sweating of the skins of his people but spelled nothing but greater riches and ease for the Talker to Alligators.

But now, in Cotabato as prisoner of the 'Mergans, the growth of weeds and grasses in the town streets spelled for him nothing but toil, sweat and shame.

No respite was he given.

From morning till night the Turner of Himself into Serpents made one of the chain-gang constantly employed in cutting the grass and cleaning the town streets. And naturally it proved to be an occupation that served to cause him to shed his superfluous fat, along with the last vestiges of his dignity.

To the Moros of Cotabato, the bringing of him among them by the Governor occasioned no small measure of anxiety. Here among them he was brought under circumstances certain to excite his greatest anger and resentment. Naturally,

his hatred and conspiring should be against his captors, the 'Mergans.

But if their magic left them invulnerable to him, might he not be working off on some of his own people more or less of

his surplus spleen?

What devilment might not this Talker to the Hungry Ones put them up to? Whose blood might he not suck when he turned himself into a murcielago? Into whose heels might he not sink his venomed fangs when he turned himself into a

Nor, as the days passed without any dire happenings of the sort, was their fear of him allayed, did their dread of his super-

natural powers lessen.

But very certain it nevertheless early became known to Telecoco himself that all the weird magic that made him so dreaded among the Moros, against these 'Mergans was powerless.

And this conclusion ceased to be a secret of his own mind when, as shortly happened, he began begging cigarettes and betel-nuts about the streets as might and did the meanest slaves.

And why not? For doubtless Telecoco was convinced that so cutting grass and sweating in the 'Mergan service he must finish his days. But that the shrewd Governor had other plans for him became apparent when, one day, he had Telecoco brought before him and said:

"Well, old raider, are you still believing you can afford to

fight the 'Mergans?"

And it was with very humble downcast eyes and pitiful trembling of his pendulous underlip that Telecoco answered:

"No, no, Mighty One. For, by the Prophet's beard, Telecoco has not enough strength left to fight the mosquitoes off

his face."

"But what of your bitcharis with the alligators? Why are you not playing murciélago and sucking my blood, or turning yourself into some sort of wiggler and biting me with poisoned fangs?"

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A very sheepish expression had washed most of the truculent cunning out of the villain's face when Telecoco answered:

"By the father of alligators, Mighty One, it seems that all

that is only effective against my own people."

"To be sure," the Governor answered, "and it is precisely because I believe it will still remain effective against your people that better days are ahead for you if you will do precisely as I tell you."

"By the Prophet's beard, Mighty One, after Allah's law and

will alone, next for Telecoco shall come yours."

"Very well, then I shall give you a chance to prove it.

"Tomorrow I shall take you to your rancheria and reinstate you in all your privileges and powers as Datu. So restored to power, I shall not interfere with any of your ancient laws or tribal customs, so you keep order in your district and obey me. But you must stop all marauding, whether by your own people or your neighbors. If I send you word that the people of any of your neighbors are vexing me, you will deal with them. I shall expect you to efface them quite in your own way and shall not question the means you employ to remove my vexations. What do you say, old raider?"

"Mabpia—pia! Very, very good, O Mighty One. Your will

shall be Telecoco's law. Try him."

"I understand that those who vex the Datu Telecoco seldom

live long; is that correct?"

The ferocity that shone from the cruel old eyes and the wicked smile that distorted the mouth were a sufficient answer, but, of course, on such a matter of pride the Turner of Himself into Serpents very quietly answered:

"None that vex Telecoco lives, Mighty One—none of his

own people."

The restoration of the Datu Telecoco was cause of no less

satisfaction to the Datu Dikaya than to Telecoco.

Dikaya had suffered more heavy demand on his diplomacy and courage in the new post to which he had been elevated by the Governor than his weak nature would have managed

to much longer stand. And glad was he to return to his very peaceful down-river rancheria.

Nor were Morine's theories and policy long to lack a severe

test.

Shortly, his spies brought Morine advice that Ishmael, whom he had elevated to the Datuship of Linta's district, was running things with a high hand.

About him he was assembling a strong force of his Maratuns and boldly was he boasting that no school should be started in his territory or any 'Mergans there establish themselves.'

From all the other districts the news was good. The Datus were all entirely content while let alone. Even the great Ali, half-brother to Linta and of far more power and influence among his people, although less aggressively warlike than Linta, was expressing his entire willingness to receive the teachers he had been advised would soon be sent into his district.

But obviously if the battling old raider Ishmael was not promptly suppressed, he would be certain to start a flame of revolt against the 'Mergan plans that must soon sweep all

the neighboring districts.

Hence the Governor lost no time in sending one of his secret agents to Telecoco, with the very simple advice that the Datu Ishmael and certain of the raiders among his Maratuns, each of whom he named, were very seriously vexing him. That was all.

But well he knew it was quite enough—and also well did he realize that it constituted the heaviest possible test he could make of Telecoco's readiness and ability to serve him.

Ishmael and his Maratuns were the most desperate, bold

and bloody of all the raiders of the valley.

However, Morine felt that though probably Telecoco would lack the courage to strike them openly, he would be pretty sure to reach them all by one or another line of dark Oriental strategy.

Nor, as it turned out, had Morine overestimated Telecoco's

resource!

A PACIFIC CONQUEST

Very few days elapsed before Telecoco sent him word that it was his pleasure to advise the Mighty One that since the Datu Ishmael and nine of his Maratuns had very suddenly sickened and died, it had become unnecessary to lead against them the force of warriors he had been organizing to kill or capture them.

Thus, very quietly and simply, Fate, acting through some secret emissaries of Telecoco, whether in the form of serpents or otherwise, effectively pacified, for the present at least, the

more turbulent of Linta's recent followers.

So it was with a very great personal satisfaction that Governor Morine sometime later remarked to Captain Tony Trigg:
"No task in all this world is hard to do when are known that

"No task in all this world is hard to do when one knows the

material he has to work with.

"The Commanding General distrusted my plan to hold the Moros in check and extend our schools without warfare, without putting a well-organized force into the field, ready at all times to swat them. Not unnaturally, for he is wholly ignorant of the Moro character.

"But I know them-perhaps it isn't too much to say that I

know them even better than they know themselves.

"You sure do know them, Joe, as does no other white man in the Island. Just how long had you been here on the coast when the General made you Acting Governor?"

"Three years, Tony, by turns planting here on the coast

and traveling freely among the Moros as a trader.

"You know they have my sympathy. It is the old story of 'Give a dog a bad name,' from the generations of their piracy that left no sailing craft safe on their seas.

"Never did the Spaniards manage to do better than to maintain an insecure foothold within their fortifications at a few

points along the coast.

"And yet what the local government don't understand, what I've been unable to make them appreciate and believe, is that the Moros were already conquered, absolutely conquered, long before, many, many years before our first expedition landed in Mindanao."

"Conquered? These Moros conquered before we came? What the devil do you mean, Joe? Why you just admitted

that the Spaniards were powerless against them."

"True again, Tony, and never in another thousand years would the Spaniards have managed to conquer them, for their coming and campaigning had for its only purpose the whipping them into line as dependable tribute payers."

"But how can you say they were conquered then?"

"Their conquest, Tony, had been absolutely pacific, but nevertheless I can demonstrate to you it was a completely

effective conquest.

"They were conquered, my boy, by the Chinese traders, who many years before began sowing broadcast among them the germs of the trading instinct. Out of the growth of this trading instinct, as always where trade is extended among warlike peoples, there arose and spread among the Moros an appreciation of the far larger ease and prosperity any people may gain from peace than from war.

"The more seductive luxuries the Chinese brought them, the more the lands planted and tilled and the fewer the raid-

ers living off spoils robbed from their neighbors.

"The Spaniards never knew it any more than our Government has come to learn it; but it is the truth that the Moros had already become a peace-loving and industrial people long before we came among them."

"But how the devil did you learn that?"

"I learned that, Tony, by personal observation and actual experience. With none but native burden-bearers, I have for three years ranged the bush and hills, never accompanied by a single armed follower, received everywhere with kindness and finding nowhere anything but peace and industry, with the exception of their slave-raiding of the neighboring wild tribes.

"Of course, it is unnecessary to say that before going among them I had studied hard until I had gotten a good working knowledge of the Moro language and had made myself fa-

miliar with the Koran and the Luwaren.

A PACIFIC CONQUEST

"Everywhere I went I found the Chinese; and I may say now, after five years in Mindanao, I have not heard of a single instance of the injury or robbery of a Chino by a Moro."

"That sounds right, Joe; evidently the Chinese are safe among them, but it seems to me you took crazy chances going

among them alone."

"Nonsense; so anybody could have gone or can go now, and in any numbers, so they do not outrage Moro religion or cus-

tom.'

"Well, Joe," spoke Captain Tony Trigg, with a grimace of disappointment, "if you're right, as I am bound to believe you are, and can manage to continue bagging and training Datus to do your policing, as you bagged and trained Telecoco, it looks like pretty dull days ahead for the constabulary and the

army."

"It certainly should mean dull days for both organizations—but it won't. No such good luck. Neither by experience of civil administration nor by knowledge of Moro character are the army men who make up the majority of our local Government fitted for this job, and I just feel it that one day some order or orders will be issued that will plunge us into warfare and deluge the Island with blood."

"Ho, ho," shouted Tony jumping up and capering about the room, "then will come the chance to work the cramps out

of my joints and wear the rust off my arms."

"Yes, Tony, your chance; but if I'm not overvaluing you, you will not be long sickening of your work."





CHAPTER XLVI

WILD TOSSING WAVES OF LOVE

It was one of those velvet-blue Mindanao nights, the air heavy with intoxicating tropical fragrance that would suffice to stir to violent indiscretion the blood of even the most phlegmatic lover.

They had gone out for a stroll, Ruth and Tony.

They were alone—or so at least they believed themselves—standing within the shadows of the *platanos*, where Tony had so longed to have her beside him, looking out into those pearlgrey mists of the river within whose seclusion he had so longed to drift and drift and drift with her in a *vinta*.

For some time they stood within the shadows of the platanos, both silent, Ruth thinking of God knows what, Tony aflame of his love for this strangely cold lady of the snows, still clinging, loverlike, to the hope that one day she would

warm to him as he to her.

How such things happen it is given to no one to know, unless perchance to that cunning Cupid from whom probably no lover has yet managed to conceal any of his most secret yearnings.

Perhaps it was just one of those rude impulses for which Ruth had chided him, or perhaps the rash act that was to serve to imperil his sweetheart had its birth in the hope that

it might serve to melt her frigid mood.

Whatever the inspiration of the act, it was without a word or other hint of his purpose that Tony suddenly seized Ruth, crushed her to his breast, passionately kissed her lips, her eyes, her forehead, and buried his face in the yellow waves of her hair.

Ah! at last!

So in those yellow waves happily would he drown!
But that was not to be—at least not in those particular waves.

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For instantly Ruth recovered from the shock of her surprise; with asperity almost bordering on disgust, she sharply rebuked him:

"Tony, that will do!

"Never be such an idiot again if you expect to hold my respect—and regard!

"Your notion of love is too crude, too raw, too like the law-

less loves of Bacchanalians.

"If we're to get on, you must treat me with the respectful reserve that alone should characterize the relations of rational beings who are drawn to each other by mutual intellectual interests."

Poor Tony!

For his realization had no longer endured than the mere wretched little second that suffices to begin and end even the longest of our dreams.

Idiot! Just that one word served to drop his temperature

and to make him drop Ruth and step back.

More to himself than to her Tony almost whispered, "I just simply don't understand. God knows I should be sorry to be rude, last of all women in the world to Ruth. But in the name of all wildly throbbing hearts and hammering pulses, how could I help it?"

"I dare say not, Tony. It is just you. What you love you must crush and smother in silly kisses as did drunken Bacchanals. And it is all such a mystery to me when in other ways you are ever so infinitely tender and considerate."

And presently while Tony still stood silent, oppressed, puzzling, Ruth added, "I'm rather feeling the chill of the river

mists; we will return to quarters, if you don't mind."

And as they turned and strolled away, a dusky figure that throughout the incident had been lurking a few feet from them, deeper within the shadows of the *platanos*, sank to the ground digging nails into its palms, grinding its teeth and rocking like one suffering great pain.

Directly they reached her quarters, Tony bade Ruth good

night-and left her.

WILD TOSSING WAVES OF LOVE

Whatever else remained to do?

For any but the maddest lover's love, the incident within the shadow of the *platanos* had been enough to completely kill it.

But if love in general is blind, such utterly mad love as Tony's

is senseless.

He was not so much precisely hurt as startled and more pro-

foundly puzzled.

Certainly Ruth was more attached to him than to any other living creature. That was always cropping out in their conversations, and yet a marble statue could not be less responsive to his tenderness.

Where, our blind and senseless lover questioned, are her im-

pulses?

Ignoring the patent fact that the girl he idolized was as pathetically passionless as any idol hewn from stone.

He must think—must try to think. So on and on he strolled alone.

Whither? He did not care, nor did he realize until he found himself within the rank growths that now are the only garrison of the old stone fort on Tantuan Hill.

But alone?

No; he had not come alone.

Silent as a haunting shade, step by step he had been closely followed.

But that he did not know.

For some time poor tortured Tony stood looking down—upon the one lighted window of Cotabato that held interest for him.

The soft night breeze that stirred his auburn curls cooled his brow and slowed his pulses, until at length he began actually to think.

How could he hope that poor parody of love that was all the sentiment he had aroused in Ruth could suffice him?

Certainly it could not.

He must have great, hot, high-swelling, wild-tossing waves of love that would eagerly enfold him when into them he

plunged, wild waves of love that might strangle him but that would never give him up.

They must separate, Ruth and he.

That should not be difficult, so he could manage to tear her from his heart, for plainly he had offended her. Too rudely had he stirred the lifeless pool of placidity in which she dwelt.

To forget her; that was the trouble.

Ha! Taps were sounding, and it's time he, too, should be seeking his quarters.

But no more had he turned than from the shadows out upon him headlong sprang a dusky figure!

At his throat it leaped, as if to throttle him!

So suddenly was it upon him, that before the ready bushfighter had time to so much as lift his hands, or even to think, sinewy arms were fiercely clasped around his neck, for a moment nigh strangling him, and tightly interlocked with his were powerful limbs that swayed and nearly threw him.

Through such instants one lives years and years, and reviews

his life.

So Captain Tony Trigg relived the years and reviewed his life, and was on the point of commending his soul to God, when, instead of the kris stab he believed inevitable, hot lips were by turns furiously pressing his and sobbing his name in the low, melodious tones he knew so well.

Absorbed in Ruth, faithful to his love for her as he had been, despite the compelling appeal of what he well knew to be Esa's mad love for him, at first he roughly seized her by the shoulders and sought to push her from him. But the harder he strove to free himself, the tighter she clung.

So they struggled and swayed, locked together as one of

body as completely as both were one of desire.

But finally he found voice.

"Tu estas loca, gordita; libreme!" "Thou art mad, little plump

one; free me!" he cried.

"Never; never will Esa free you, Son of Fire. Esa wants vou-now, always."

WILD TOSSING WAVES OF LOVE

And followed another storm of kisses that nearly smothered him.

"But stop; you are mad," feebly ordered Tony, as soon as

he could get his breath.

"Yes, Son of Fire; and Esa will stay mad until she has you. That white woman shall not have you. She does not want you as Esa does. Esa saved you. You are hers. Never 'til you kill Esa shall you leave her."

"But-but, little one-"

"No; never shall the white woman get you," Esa interrupted; "she cannot do for you what Esa can. She? Ha! She is cold as the hill pools of mornings, while Esa burns, and burns

and burns as does the mid-day sun."

And since we already have his own word that he was of the earth, earthy, little the wonder that before he knew it Tony's powerful arms were constraining more fiercely than they had repulsed her.





CHAPTER XLVII

EXTRAVAGANT ALTRUISM

When the bugles sounded reveille the morning after Esa had leaped upon him out of the shadows of the old stone fort on Tantuan Hill, Captain Tony Trigg was wide awake.

Indeed he had not closed his eyes throughout the night.

The crisis of his life was come. That he well knew. Joe had predicted no less than what had happened, had warned him and advised him.

But who may venture to advise another?

All night the old Adam in him had been calling.

The voice of primitive man had been ringing in his ears.

"What one wants, one takes!"

To be sure he was not properly a primitive man, nor by the code of his kind might he continue indulging himself in primitive privileges.

But what's a code that forbids the taking of what one wants

—taking it all?

To hell with it.

Esa!

What man in all the world could find the strength to repulse such a love as hers?

Little savage! Yes, to be sure.

But good God what a woman!

Where in the ranks of civilization, formalized by custom, timid of the protection under which they dwell, impoverished of big masterful emotions by the conventions of their environment, may one find a girl with a soul so great, a love so big, a heart so bold as hers?

But a savage! Mate with her?

How the folks at home would despise him!

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Yes, of course, they'd be bound to—for they don't know Esa.

Ha! but why should he consider them? Each must work out the problem of life's best happiness for himself.

To the devil with them.

Why condemn himself to the passionless pallidity of their

lives from fear of their opinion?

They need not pride themselves of their superior virtues. Once, not so very, very many generations ago, their own forbears, men and women alike, loved and lusted humanly, passionately, as does Esa, and—yes, as do Esa and he.

Ha! That was back in the manly days when men fought and took by force of their own strong arms the things that

now they win by superior deceit.

Theirs was manly battling, when each risked his life for what he wanted, while now the craft and hypocrisy of lying tongues buy the loot and women then won by flashing blades.

Ah, that splendid elder world, wherein one fought when he

hated and loved where he would!

Had he only lived then! How often had he dreamed it! But dreams, all dreams; and dreams are never realized.

Never realized?

Nonsense; why by Heaven, here was his realization, the realization of his dearest dreams.

Out here on the edge of the world, the very outer edge of his world, here was his realization—here with Esa.

But Tony must not deceive himself.

So mated, that would be his end, the end of all close sym-

pathies and associations with his kind.

One step, just one step forward and he could never get back. Full well he knew the law of life that no man may mate with any woman materially beneath him mentally or morally who is not inevitably dragged down to her level.

But dragged down? Nothing of the sort.

Mating with Esa? Why, that would elevate him to the splendid heights of her own great love.

EXTRAVAGANT ALTRUISM

And whatever the devil else but love matters, anyway? And so on and on mused Captain Tony Trigg's badly vexed mind until Guard Mount sounded, and he hurried across to headquarters—to find Governor Morine absorbed in some dispatches he had just received and bitterly cursing under his breath.

Dropping into a chair near the Governor's desk he asked: "What's up, Joe; what's biting you? You look like you wanted to hit the war-path, like somebody's scalp would be in danger if you get to him."

"By God, it's come, that's all."

"Well, what's come? I'm sure I've heard of no troubles on

the road our way to make you look so warlike."

"Why, Tony, the Government has just passed an act that, if literally carried out, if not rescinded or pigeonholed, means the virtual extermination of this Moro race.

"You know that since the first military head of this district arrived here we have been assuring these Moros that they should not be interfered with in the practice of any of their ancient laws or customs. For that they have our word."

"But, whatever is this bomb of an act, Joe?"

"It's a law which prohibits slave-hunting and slave-owning, and fixes a penalty on each offence of ten thousand pesos or twenty years in jail, or both fine and imprisonment, at the discretion of the courts."

"Ho, ho! That means war, war that can't end until long

after we're gone, Joe."

"It certainly does, Tony, but it's a war in which I shall take

no part.

"For much as the more humane of the officers of the war department may regret it, it means a war more unequal and cruel than that which practically wiped out the red race in North America.

"It is all too shockingly bad. The Government just don't seem to understand that slavery and polygamy alike are explicitly authorized by the Koran, the precepts of which have been the law of these people for so many generations.

"Why look at the Datu Ali, the half-brother of Linta, justly the most esteemed of all the Datus! It was only a few weeks ago that I stayed several days with him at his rancheria.

'To test his temper I plainly asked him what he would do

if our authorities decreed the freeing of his slaves.

"Very simply the Datu Ali answered me:

"My friend, you know that my slaves are my only wealth, my only medium of exchange. Take them from me, and I must become my own hewer of wood and drawer of water!"

"But what would you do if such an order were issued?

Would you fight?

"No,' Ali answered. 'Never would Ali attack the 'Mergans. He would gather his people, abandon his rancheria and plantations and withdraw into the wilderness.'

"Ah, I see," I answered, "and if Ali were pursued and there attacked, there all would die rather than surrender, I presume?

"My friend is quite right,' quietly answered Ali. 'Let it not come to that; but if it must so come better to die faithful to the Prophet than to permit ourselves to be stripped of aught the Koran provides we may have.'

"One need not be a great student of history to realize what

that means, need he, Tony?"

"Just war, Joe, war till the Moros are all dead."

"Quite so. And look at the outrageous impolicy and inhumanity of it.

"Here in this district, and chiefly in the valley, are sixty

thousand Moros.

"The mass of them are peaceful and industrious.

"Among them, as I have told you, I have traveled freely and been kindly received.

"All they ask is to be left in peace, to live out their lives in accordance with the lights of the religion of their fathers.

"Thus, put forward whatever hypocritical apology for an excuse one may, this war with the Moros will be in its essential essence a religious war, a renewal of the war The Cross has seldom long spared The Crescent.

"This is a profoundly grave situation, my boy.

EXTRAVAGANT ALTRUISM

"This new Act inevitably decrees the outlawing and then the ultimate destruction of a race, that, while regarded as savages by our folks at home, owns a religion which has done more for them than any of the Christian creeds have done

for their exemplars.

"How more? In that, broadly throughout the world, the faithful to Islam, and most are faithful who even pretend allegiance to the Prophet, never use intoxicants in any form, and hence are wholly free from the vice of drunkenness that is one of the greatest curses of Christendom, and, further, in that for the faithful death holds no terrors, whereas few indeed are the Christians who do not confront their end with craven hearts.

"Again, I would repeat, it is the old story Give a dog a bad

name.'

"And yet what General Brisbane wrote of the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians is also literal truth of the Moros—

"That the Indians do not make war until pressed, you as a

resident of the Western Plains since 1870 must admit.'

"At the first attempt to enforce this Act, instantly very many of the wide fields of this rich valley will be left to go fallow. Clan by clan, large bodies of the Moros will retire into the jungle, there to starve and suffer as harried savages.

"Thus this Act outlaws the race, for even though unpursued by us, no means of subsistence remains for them but

raiding and plundering.

"It is the end of all my hopes of the rapid and peaceful de-

velopment of this enormously rich Island.

"And I'm thinking shortly I'll be leaving. Years must elapse, many years, before there is any chance of the indus-

trial development of the Moro Provinces.

"Not for generations will the Filipino race become as industrious, efficient soil tillers as are now the Moros. And yet our home laws and the weight of home sentiment that inspired them will always preclude employment of contract labor.

"And thus, so far as I can see, the occupation by the United

States of the Philippine Islands, of Luzon as well as of the Moro Provinces, must remain indefinitely an enormously extravagant piece of altruism.

"It's all too bad, too bad, too bad."

And as, after leaving headquarters, Captain Tony Trigg marched across to the barracks of his little brown terriers, he wearily murmured to himself:

"And no less an extravagant piece of altruism has been my love and devotion to Ruth, I'm fearing, than is American in-

tervention in these Islands!"



CHAPTER XLVIII

LOVE DIES HARD

All was excitement and activity in Cotabato.

Never before had the drowsy monotony of its routine been so rudely disturbed.

All greatly to the delight of the eager Chino traders, for to them it meant increased business profits.

Heavy reinforcements were coming in, regulars, constabulary and scouts.

The rebellious Moros who had retired to the hill jungles were

to be disciplined.

It was Captain Tony Trigg's last night at the post, for he was under orders to lead his company of little brown terriers against the Datu Linta's Maratuns and other clan-folk who had stampeded into the hill country lying between Mt. Apo and Davao Bay directly after the death of Datu Ali.

The following night he was to embark his company to take the field, and now he was come to Ruth's quarters to advise her of his departure.

Nor was that all.

Love dies hard, none so hard as that of a really strong man.

And Tony was strong.

Convinced, as he regarded himself, that his affection for Ruth Snell must continue and end the resultless experiment in altruism it had so far remained, nevertheless deep down in his heart lurked the hope that his announcement of his departure on an expedition of obviously no small bodily peril might serve to draw from her some sign or expression of the tenderness he craved.

Might not his departure efface the resentment of his embraces and kisses she plainly showed and expressed the night they stood in the shadows of the platanos?

Anyway, he dared to hope so.

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But little did he know the uncompromising, unyielding will

of the daughter of James Snell.

With daughter, as with father, a decision once formed was final. Fail in whatever it should, hurt how and whomsoever it might, that did not matter. A decision reversed is no decision at all.

Out of unalterable decisions, very definite plans are soon

vigorously sprouting.

And how unfortunate it is that never can we know how our plans may work out until, usually, it is too late to escape any of the disastrous consequences they may occasion.

After releasing the cold, limp fingers Ruth had extended to him, and dropping into a chair beside her, Tony began

warmly:

"Seems an age, dear, since I've seen you, except at a distance,

while on your way to school."

"An age, Captain?" Ruth replied, with a few degrees of more acute chill in her tones than usual. "How perfectly absurd, when it's only a little matter of two or more days since—since the regretful evening when you made such a violent demonstration of—well of animalism."

"But, good God, Ruth, dear, surely you cannot designate as 'animalism' the embraces and kisses a lover delights to

bestow upon the woman he adores!

"Kisses and embraces! Ah, Ruth, dear, it seems to me it is such caresses that alone are all-sufficing; who has them, lacks nothing, wants nothing—but more caresses; who dies a

stranger to them, has not lived."

"For such caresses, where they are really tender and bestowed with self-control and decorum, I suppose there may be some apology—notwithstanding the stupidity of it and the very positive danger that the kisses may convey a disease from one to the other. But yours, Captain, are out of a measure of passion which makes you immoderate, violent, furious, ignoring or wholly blind to the intellectual, indeed I may say the almost spiritual bond, that should be the chief motive in the matings of men and women."

LOVE DIES HARD

"There you are again, Ruth, withdrawn entirely outside of my mental atmosphere. Your words are plain enough, and your tones convey to me the conviction that you mean precisely what you say. Only to me it is impossible to think in such terms.

"Of course, the tendency of the higher education and thought of modern civilization is toward the suppression of the normal emotions and impulses bred into us out of Mother Nature, but still I'm thinking incalculable generations must elapse before—well, before human blood ceases to energize any but purely mental human activities."

"You don't surprise me, Captain. It is probably even more difficult for you to appreciate and concur in my views than

for me to understand and agree with yours. You—"

"Pardon the interruption, Ruth, but you are entirely right. And it is the growing realization that it is as wholly impossible for me to attain your ideals as for your ideals to content mine

that has been breaking my heart.

"I have been adoring you from the first day we met. Sweet and tender were the home relations of my youth. At home, an indulgent father and a passionately affectionate mother so strongly inoculated me with the love of Love, that throughout the many years rude campaigning and isolated mess life have deprived me of it, I have actually suffered—suffered the lack of an object on which to pour out my affections.

"The accumulation was large enough it seemed to me to suffice any woman who should not find my sort of a man ob-

jectionable to her.

"And so, I have now long been hoping, you might find my love to suffice you and to win from you the love I must needs have in return to leave us fairly quits—for even love is ever a greedy bargainer and ill content to receive less than it gives."

"True, Captain, and I take it you would agree that your kind of love could never be content except when returned in

kind."

"Quite so-as, obviously, never could yours, Ruth. But

please don't mistake my phrases for bitterness. I am too much overwhelmed with the sense of my loss for that. Just how dear your memory must ever remain to me I cannot pretend to try to tell you, and—and God grant you may find a man at least more nearly approaching your ideals than I do. What a downright providence for both of us that I am ordered to take the field just now, isn't it?"

"No, Captain, for it takes you into great danger, I fear, and your marching orders are not necessary to procure the separation that is best for both of us. The fact is, after mature reflection for two days, I have decided to resign and return home on the next transport."

"Really! You don't mean it!"

"Yes; the fact is, I might have so resigned earlier but for our—but for my regard for you and my feeling that my leaving would distress you. You know I'm devoted to my work, but work that shows no results, no progress, soon becomes hateful. And upon my word the only one of my pupils I can see any hope of improving and uplifting as materially as I had hoped is this pagan girl, Esa, whom I have adopted."

"Yes, Esa is indeed very bright," Tony agreed.

"She certainly is, and I intend telling her this evening that I have made up my mind to take her home with me, and there to give her every advantage and opportunity within my power."

"Heavens, Ruth," the surprised Tony stammered, "you mean you are going to make it an actual adoption, and carry

her away with you, take her into your family?"

"Yes, that's precisely what I have intended from the beginning, so she should seem to continue to deserve it up to

the time of my leaving."

"Well, I really hope you'll do nothing of the kind," Tony vigorously protested. "You'll regret it as sure as fate. Remember, from the local point of view Esa is no more a child. She's a woman grown, as matured of mind, according to her lights, as of body. The savage instincts bred into her by nature are now therein fixed by habit. Remember that. Fancy

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the awful responsibility you'd assume by taking her, a wild creature it probably will never be safe for anyone to try to constrain. Never would she herself be happy or even content under the restraints of civilization, nor do I see how she could fail to be anything but an anxiety and perhaps a grief to you."

Tony had been so very earnest in his apparent concern for

her that it was in a softened tone Ruth replied:

"I admit there is very much truth in what you say, Tony, but my tasks have never been so easy that I'm afraid of big and difficult ones. You may be sure I had not begun the experiment except with the purpose to carry it through, and I certainly shall not abandon it unless I reach a point where I find I can no longer control her."

"Well, of course it is your affair, Ruth, and if Esa consents

to go I suppose there's nothing more to say about it."

"Consents! Why, I'm not intending to ask her consent, for I suppose in her ignorance and blindness the little pagan would prefer to stay here. I shall just take her with me, in the conviction that in time she will come to understand and appreciate what I'm doing for her and to be glad of the advantage and opportunity given her."

"Well, really that does not leave me much more to say, Ruth, except to wish you the best possible luck in this serious experiment—and a large measure of the happiness I had

hoped to be privileged to bring you."

And, presently, after Ruth had sat for some moments completely absorbed in her thoughts, Tony rose and taking her

hand, added:

"Good night, Ruth—and I guess it will have to be good-bye, too, for I shall be on the jump tomorrow from dawn to dark, making ready for my expedition. It's all too bad, but of course it can't be helped, and so—well, good-bye, Ruth."

"Good-bye, Tony. Rest assured I shall never forget your kind services and devotion, and shall never cease to pray for

your safety from all perils and for-your happiness.'





CHAPTER XLIX

ESA'S BIGGEST MAGIC

Captain Tony Trigg was a very sadly racked and nearly frantic man the night he bade Ruth Snell good-bye and left her

quarters.

The gray mists of the river had spread abroad and wrapped the town in fog so thick one could not see a pace ahead of him. Little the wonder, then, that Tony wandered. The less the wonder when we recall the double blow Ruth had dealt him; he had lost the girl he had been idolizing and was confronting the apparently certain loss of another girl who madly loved him.

As the fires of his love for Ruth had burned lower and lower until now they were no more than dimly glowing embers, hot

flames of passion for Esa had seized upon him.

Not for a moment should it be mistakenly thought that Ruth could not have held him, that Tony was by nature fickle, for he was nothing of the sort. Just a little touch of tenderness from Ruth would have probably sufficed to hold him true to her, perhaps indefinitely.

But when that night of their farewell the embers crumbled to ashes, he would have been far less than the thoroughly human type he was if he could have shut his ears to the eager

calls of Esa's love.

Ha, was not hers precisely the love he had dreamed of?

And how hungrily he would seize it and tightly clasp it were she a Christian maid of any race!

But a pagan—she was a wild pagan—so wild and unrestrained in her passions that she would as readily take the life of any whomsoever as give up her own life for him.

And there was the point: Could he hope that ever again, in woman of any race, he would be the object of such mad idolatry as was Esa's?

But just then little brown fingers firmly gripped his hand and detained him and a soft voice warned:

"Cuidado! Take care, Son of Fire! Another step and you're in the river, food for the Hungry Ones! Are you sick? You've

been walking like the blind.'

Which was altogether inconsiderate of Fate, in two respects: First, because it brought him face to face with the biggest problem of his life while yet it was new to him and unsolved; and, second, because a plunge among the alligators of the Rio Grande might have saved him from the agony of a still more terrible destiny.

But, naturally, at the moment he was very grateful, notwithstanding the incident instantly made more acute his sense of the loss that threatened him, for a guardian angel at the elbow ever alert to intervene and save one from peril

is not a gift the gods often vouchsafe us.

When he found voice, he simply answered:

"Thank you, gordita; it seems I've wandered in the mists."
"But you are sick or something troubles you, Son of Fire,"
the soft voice persisted; "you don't seem even to hear, for
one may hear the rushing river even when the mists hide it."

"No, little one, I'm not sick but—yes, this may be my only chance to talk to you. I am in trouble. Tomorrow I go to the hills to fight the Moros, and now I am just come from telling the white lady good-bye."

"Ah, and the Son of Fire is hurt to leave her?"

"Yes, and no; it is not precisely that. The white lady tells me she leaves here by the next boat to return to her home—to our country far across the seas."

"Ah, that is good; Esa likes that," the soft voice murmured. "But, little one, the white lady wants to do a great deal for you—she wants to take you to her country. She will teach you all the 'Mergan magic, make you like the 'Mergan girls. There she will take you to live with her as her daughter."

"She, that cold white woman, wants Esa to go with her

across the seas?"

"Yes."

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"And always—always there to live with her, across the seas?"

"Yes, probably always. It isn't likely she will ever return

here."

"And you, Son of Fire?"

"I? I remain here at my work, little one."

"Always?"

"Ah, who can tell? Probably as long as there are Moros to fight—which very likely means to the end of my days."

"But you know, Esa will never follow her, Son of Fire. When Esa may not go where you go, Esa dies. The white

lady goes alone."

Bang! Smash! With crushing force the weight of his crisis fell upon him. There was no dodging or sidestepping. Indeed, there was scarcely time for a moment's reflection.

And the responsibility was all his.

For he knew she would do, literally, what he directed.

Meantime Esa was either meeting the emergency with extraordinary bravery or else she herself was stunned by the weight of the blow.

Her tones neither rose nor fell.

The little brown fingers were nearly biting into his, but not otherwise did she show any emotion.

Few were the instants this strong man took to terminate

his trial.

Perhaps no man's fidelity to his traditions and the conventions ingrained into him in his youth was ever more severely tested.

Himself by nature a throw-back to remote generations when men loved and battled without restraint, these natural proclivities had been fostered and strengthened by years of battling on wild frontiers.

But few men are, after all, better or worse than the traditions of their youth, and all the traditions of Captain Tony

Trigg had been of the best.

Where all power lay in his hands, there, too, lay all the responsibility.

And to do anything that could bring grief to his old father and mother was not to be considered.

Thus it seemed that passion had lost and tradition won when he laid his hand on Esa's shoulder and looking kindly down into the big anxious eyes, very gently murmured:

"Little one, you should go. You must go with the white lady. It is best for you. I shall not deny I hate to lose you, little one, but the white lady will make you like the women of her race. It is better you should go."

"But Esa don't want to be like the 'Mergan women; if all are like her, Esa would die. Esa wants to stay here—hopes one day to go back to her home among the tree tops of Mt.

Apo."

"But, little one, think of all the wonderful magic you have already learned from the Moros and from us, and let me tell you all of it is very little to what you will learn if you go with

the white lady."

"You know, Son of Fire. What you say must be true. But of what good to Esa is magic that she cannot use? Esa only cares for magic that will make her more powerful to rule her people than were Punungan and Usup."

"So, little one! You never told me that before. And so

you're figuring to return one day and rule your clan?"

"For that Usup taught Esa. That Esa has wanted, that has been all she wanted, but now she wants you, Son of Fire. Nothing else. You are the biggest magic Esa has learned, bigger than all of Usup's, yes, bigger than Lancona's, for now only could she use Lancona's magic in your service, to do your will."

"Lancona's magic? What is that, little Esa?"

"That? Oh, nothing—nothing like yours, Son of Fire, that by turns makes Esa strong and leaves her weak. Ah, you don't know. Esa wants you all the time. Wherever she walks, she sees you, Son of Fire; of nights she wakes feeling herself crushed breathless in your arms. You, Son of Fire, you are Esa's god, greater than Dewata. Esa must do what you say, but Esa wants you, Esa—"

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"But stop, stop; por Dios, stop, little one!" cried the severely tried Tony; for, while her voice was still low and even, to him who knew her so well, its very self-control more strongly emphasized the waves of passion that were sweeping her than could any violence.

When the ungovernable appear to be governing themselves,

it is time to have a care.

"But tomorrow you leave, Son of Fire," the low voice slowly resumed, "and—tonight—tonight we are alone—as—as in the old stone fort!"

The low voice hushed, both remained silent.

The great, black Oriental eyes blazed eagerly, pleadingly, hungrily up into his.

But not for long.

For presently they softened, of conviction of assured satisfaction, as she felt his grip of her shoulder tightening.

Whereupon a kindly shift of the night breeze enveloped them in a cloud of mist so dense that not even the bright lamps of *luciérnagas* could penetrate it.





CHAPTER L

TONY AND HIS TERRIERS

From "Reveille" to "Retreat," Captain Tony Trigg and his teniente had been working like beavers with preparations for their campaign. The Quartermaster's stores were to be drawn on for munitions and innumerable details of equipment, the Commissary for provisions, and even the hospital's reserves of medicines and surgical supplies were laid under tribute, for with neither a spare surgeon nor even hospital steward available to accompany them, they must prepare to deal with their own sick and wounded.

But countless as were the items which must not be forgotten, nevertheless comparatively light was the weight and small the bulk when all the stores were assembled and subdivided into compact, convenient loads for the *cargadores*, the native burden-bearers who constitute the only transport serviceable in the hill country where the streams are so swift that *vintas* cannot be used and lack of paths precludes the

use of carabaos.

Captain Trigg was an old hand at bush fighting, and did not propose to hamper himself with a transport service that could not pretty well keep up with his little brown terriers. Moreover, he knew his tropics and what happens to temperate zone men who persist in living there as they do at home. The men were stripped as near to the buff as practicable and rations were reduced to a few nourishing but non-heating simples, with strong preference for types of food-stuffs that may be eaten uncooked, such as raisins, prunes, chocolate, etc.; the scent of smoke carries far in the jungle, and that of cooking food carries farther still. If a column is marching quietly, camp may well happen to be made within a few yards of an enemy, and all enemies native to the jungle thread its labyrinths silent as disembodied spirits and are keen of scent as any of the jungle beasts.

No noisy column ever scores a forest surprise, and when the sign shows a hot trail the making of camp fires is inviting the boloing of one's sentries or a dawn surprise of one's camp.

Hence, there was little of bacon, tinned meats or any sort of highly heating food, but plenty of rice, biscuit, sugar and

dried fruits in Captain Trigg's commissariat.

Tents, camp cots and all like weighty luxuries were dispensed with, and when shortly after "Retreat" he marched his company aboard the launch, Tony and his teniente, as well as all his men, were stripped of their underclothing and clad in nothing but shirts, trousers and rope-soled shoes—all as mobile and as fit for silent, hard marching as the enemy they were detailed to pursue.

And lucky for Tony it doubtless was that his preparation had kept him closely preoccupied, too busy to grieve over either the love that had not or over that other mad love that had so completely sufficed him, or perhaps, at the moment, even to realize that within a few days both Ruth and Esa

would be on the high seas, sailing away out of his life.

Indeed, it was not until the lights of Cotabato had faded from his sight that it suddenly occurred to Tony as strange, very strange, that he had seen nothing of Esa during the day.

What could that mean, he thought. Probably that Esa preferred to carry away with her across the seas her memories of their previous evening together within the veil of the mists to those of a parting at the launch's gang-plank where she could not have the season when a tank his band.

not hope to so much as touch his hand.

And when at last he fell asleep, it was to toss restlessly throughout a night of rapidly alternating dreams—first, of one or another of his scenes with Ruth that always left him chilled, shivering, all but congealed; and then of Esa's mad fondlings that set his pulse wildly pounding and left him hot, gasping, nigh breathless.

Did all the world hold two such wide opposites as the girl he had in vain idolized and she who now so completely pos-

sessed him?

All night long the launch chugged away up the Rio Grande,

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and all the following day as well, for his speed was such there was no fear of news of the coming of his expedition getting ahead of him.

His landing was to be made near the junction of the Kabakan and Malbul Rivers, whence his march into the hills south of Mt. Apo would begin.

It was in the brief tropical twilight that Tony emptied the

launch of his men and their supplies and equipment.

As a group of the porters were descending the gang-plank with the last of the cargo, among them Captain Trigg noted a Moro youth carrying a load, but obviously too young and light of weight to be employed for service as a porter unless in some emergency where men could not be had. At the time it struck him as strange that he could not recall having seen the lad before, either during the loading of the launch in Cotabato or while voyaging upstream.

But, after all, a porter is a porter, a creature of burden, as are domestic four-footed beasts, and since the lad was carrying his load Captain Trigg dismissed the matter from his mind.

As soon as all his effects were ashore and the individual loads were distributed among the porters, Captain Trigg began a night march. His first task was to try to surprise a couple of rancherias that were close to the outer Moro frontier and to undertake to disarm them, for the Datus of both rancherias were among the more active of the slave-raiders and hence were deemed certain to take to the bush shortly if they had not already done so.

Three hard night marches, the three intervening days passed lying very quietly in the dusky recesses of the jungle, enabled him to effect a complete surprise of the first of these

two Datus.

Summoned to surrender all his weapons of every description or have his clan exterminated, the Chief parleyed.

He pleaded, not without good reason, that the 'Mergans might as well strip him of all clothing and food supplies.

Without the arms, how defend himself and his people against

clan enemies, how till the soil now that his carabaos were dead of the rinderpest?

All which was true enough, but orders were orders and Tony

had nothing to do but persist in his demand.

Convinced of the futility of his pleadings, and less bold than most of his fellow chiefs, the Datu sullenly delivered up his

arms, and Tony's column marched on.

And it was not until his porters were filing past him out of this village that it suddenly occurred to Captain Tony Trigg that since leaving the river he had seen nothing of the young Moro lad he had observed fetching a load ashore from the

launch, the night he had disembarked his troops.

And when the circumstance struck him as so curious that he made inquiry, first of his teniente and then of his non-commissioned officers and men, it was to learn that while several recalled seeing the lad aboard the launch none had again set eyes on him since their landing at the mouth of the Kabakan.

All of which worried Captain Tony Trigg not a little, for he made sure the lad must be some messenger smuggled aboard at Cotabato to warn the Datus of the frontier to be on guard

for him.

However, such are the fortunes of war and he must make the best of it, but obviously the difficulties of his task were likely to be doubled.

And sure enough, the next rancheria he marched on he did

not manage to surprise.

Instead, to his own surprise, he was met by a messenger of its Datu with word that the Datu was advised of his approach and demanding an explanation of its purpose, and further warning him that the Datu and his people would fight till they were dead if he attempted to enter their village.

Anxious to avoid hostilities if possible, Captain Trigg camped his command and returned word to the Datu by his messen-

ger that all his arms must be surrendered forthwith.

To this message the Datu boldly answered that never had he attacked the 'Mergans, nor would he attack them if he and his people were left to themselves. But if the 'Mergan

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chiefs attempted in any way to interfere with him, he would fight, and if necessary die, for his privileges and his land.

For three days Captain Trigg patiently parleyed, but late the afternoon of the third day he came to realize that further negotiation was useless, and marched on the village.

Arrived there, he found that the Datu had sent all his women and children into the forest and had lined up his men in

front of their huts, for battle.

Directing his men under no circumstances to fire until ordered, Captain Trigg slowly advanced his men in open order, ready for the rush of the enemy he felt certain must come.

But steadily the Moros held their position, just as steadily

as Tony's men advanced.

Nothing is more trying on their enemies than a slow, steady,

silent advance of troops bearing firearms.

Would they never fire? Would those terrible 'Mergans keep coming slowly on until their weapons that smoke like Mt. Apo could be jambed against naked bodies and blow great holes in them?

That sort of fighting was just a little bit too much for Moro nerves. Had a single shot been fired, every Moro would have died on the field fighting, face to face with the white enemy.

But stand this slow, silent advance they could not. Suddenly their line broke and all "bunked," scattering among the huts, racing beyond them toward the forest and leaving their

Datu standing alone.

But no more had they deserted their splendid old War Chief than he began a very deliberate, dignified advance on the approaching line, fiercely twirling his kris about his head until it seemed that the long gray-bearded chieftain was crowned with white hot flames.

Of course he had to do it, but it is doubtful if ever in his life Captain Tony Trigg more reluctantly gave an order than that which caused the splendid old Datu to drop, riddled with

bullets, within ten feet of his enemies.

And then, since a lesson was necessary, another reluctant order soon laid the village in ashes.





CHAPTER LI

HOW RECONCILE CONFLICTING WILLS?

It was dawn.

She stood at the eastern end of the gallery of Ruth's quarters.

Her eyes were fixed on Mt. Apo, whose blue cone towered high aloft into the zenith above the mists that still shrouded the valley, the same kindly mists that veiled her last hours with Tony the night before, down by the river.

If love is a gauge given us with which to measure our capacity for suffering, as a clever French cynic has held, then, certainly, Esa's love was infinite. Her suffering was overwhelming. The memories of her ecstasy while clasped tight to Tony's breast now only served to intensify her agony.

What was she to do?

The white woman was determined to take her across the seas to the 'Mergan country. And the Son of Fire insisted she should go.

What, leave him, when that very same night he was himself starting out to war with the Moros! Ha, that would be when he would need her most, she who knew the jungles, their folk and secrets, better than any Moro.

Go across the seas with the white woman? Far better to die. The restraints of life with her in Cotabato were bad enough. Every last one of the comforts and luxuries of this 'Mergan house were obnoxious to her, made her long more and more for the care-free liberty of life among the Pugsan tree tops. In the 'Mergans' own country, how much worse it must be, ever shut within towns, stranger to the songs of hill streams and the voices of the forest!

But he has told her she must go. And his will is Esa's law. When the white woman leaves on one of the great boats that smoke like Mt. Apo, Esa, too, must leave.

But suppose the white woman should not go! Suppose she could not go back to her country!

While she may go, Esa must wait, ready to go with her, for

so he has ordered.

But if the white woman could not leave, why, then Esa would be free to follow the Son of Fire into the jungles, safe of chiding from him for doing other than his will!

But by the red wings of *Toomulkun*, look! In the name of all the *Limbings*, what is that?

To be sure it was only the blood-red tropical sun poised for an instant precisely on the point of Mt. Apo's lofty cone, but to the fevered vision of our badly-tortured little jungle mystic it was no less than a fiery glance of *Dewata*'s angry eye, in which she read a message and a mandate that first made her

shiver and then set her rigid as bronze.

Ha! At last! How often had she invoked Dewata's aid—but always in vain! But now, now at last He was come to her, to her aid! Ah, but it was a wise and a great Dewata, not to be troubled with little things; such a good Dewata, who comes and answers Esa instantly now that her need of Him is so much greater than ever before.

So? That was Dewata's will. She should have thought of

that before.

With the capture of Usup, the Pugsan clan were left without an Ingorandy.

And now that Usup was dead and could never return, who

but she, Esa, could take his place?

Who but Esa could receive Dewata's messages from the great red-winged Toomulkun, send the terrible Busau against the clan's enemies, and, by placating the big, black, limping Munowog, avert the working of calamities by that devil brood, the Limbings?

Ha! And she had been fool enough to think Lancona's magic

mightier than Dewata's!

But not now, not since that great, red, angry eye had burned its message into her brain.

"Come, Priestess; return to your clan!" said that angry eye.

HOW RECONCILE CONFLICTING WILLS?

So be it. Who might ignore so obvious a mandate direct from *Dewata*? Certainly not she, whom *Dewata* himself, acting through Usup, had dedicated to His service.

And yet there was the will of the Son of Fire, that decreed

she must cross the seas with the white woman!

How reconcile the two?

One she dared not disobey; the other she would not.

But stop. So? So? How stupid. That would do. It should have occurred to her before. That would solve the riddle. Then she could fulfill Dewata's will—and once back among her clan she could work her own will without disobedience of the Son of Fire!

So wrapt was she in her vision and in the plans it suggested that she did not realize that for some time Ruth had been standing near, closely observing her. Not until Ruth spoke did she realize it.

"Dreaming of your hill life again, I suppose, child," the white woman began in her halting Spanish.

"Yes, senora," Esa simply answered.

"But surely you must find yourself very much more comfortable and happy here with me, here where you are decently clothed and always liberally fed, and where you are learning so fast the—what you call the 'Mergan magic. Is it not so, Esa?"

"But Esa was bred there," pointing into the east where the clouds that daily veiled Mt. Apo were already climbing its flanks; "Esa was bred up there among the Mt. Apo tree tops,"

she answered.

"Yes, yes; I understand; but all the savagery of your jungle life you've got to forget, for you are not to return to Mt. Apo, I've other plans for you," Ruth continued, and there was a note of firmness in her tones that Esa had already come to understand.

"Plans for me, senora?" she asked, in apparent surprise. "Yes, I'm to leave the Island soon and return across the seas to my people. You will go with me. I shall make you my daughter, or sister, keep you with me in my home among the

'Mergans, there to live as we live, to be taught all we know, to forget all your wretched heathen gods and to learn to worship our God, the one and only true God. It is a wonderful opportunity I shall give you. You will be glad, will you not?"

"No, senora," came a very quiet answer. "Esa would stay in sight of Mt. Apo. Esa wants you to let her stay here. That

will be better-for you, senora."

"But that's my affair, girl, any trouble you are to me—and goodness knows I suppose there'll be a lot of it," she added under her breath.

"And Esa must go?"

"Yes, girl; that is my intention."

"Bueno, entonces; good, then; Esa will be ready-when the

senora goes."

"Ah, that's better, child," Ruth Snell smiled, and then passed in to her breakfast.



CHAPTER LII

STALKING MARATUNS

The first two Datus he had to deal with disposed of, Captain Trigg's next and much more serious undertaking was to lo-

cate and strike Datu Linta's clan.

They were quite a different proposition, for it is to be remembered that Linta's Maratuns were made up of the most desperate fighters and habitual slave-raiders of the Moro race. They might fly at his approach or they might take the aggressive and seek to cut him up from ambush. However, since the Datu Telecoco had managed to efface Ishmael and several of the Maratun raiders, an organized attack from them was not very likely. But surprise or surround them and it was a certainty they would fight to the death.

But prowl and crosscut the jungle of the rough hill country he was in, as much as he would, ten days elapsed before Captain Trigg struck a trail—and was convinced it must be their trail, because so far as he had been able to learn the Mara-

tuns were the only band that ranged that section.

As nearly as he could judge, there were between seventy and one hundred of them.

And along this trail, relentlessly as hounds on a hot scent,

Captain Trigg led his little brown terriers for weeks.

Often he found from the "sign" of their camps that they had been passing the night within mid-rifle range of each other, and again the artful Moros would double up or down some stream and manage to lose their pursuers for a day or two.

The going was terrible, always either through the tangle of close crowding jungle growths, wherein at every step his men were in reach of a mortal stab from an out-thrust kris, or struggling through cogon grass twice the height of one's head and thick as the hair on a dog's back.

Nowhere in the world was there ever harder campaigning

than Captain Trigg's two months' pursuit of the Maratuns, often for continuous distance of as much as twelve miles wading breast deep in the cold waters and stumbling and falling over the boulders of mountain streams to which his quarry had taken to throw him off their scent, and which he must of course follow to find where they left the stream and again plunged into the jungle.

Nor dared he abate his guard for a second.

For while this pursuit was much like the old Far Western game of walking down wild horses, wherein one man afoot kept a band of horses moving for nine days and then usually got them so worn and exhausted that, still afoot himself, he could drive them into a pen, nevertheless the Maratuns were quite another proposition.

Day by day and week by week the pursuit continued, Captain Trigg and his men steadily growing leaner and harder as

long as their provisions lasted.

But, just fancy it, ye livers on the fat flesh pots of civilization, for four entire weeks of the finish of the campaign the complete exhaustion of the supplies compelled this indomitable soldier to subsist his men like savages, on the edible nuts, fruits and roots of the jungle!

Now the chase was getting close, the quarry never more

than a few hours ahead of him.

Vigilance must be redoubled, for surely the Moros must by

this time be desperate.

Thus of nights the little brown terriers were made to sleep in a narrow circle, heads to the circle's centre and feet out, bayonets fixed on rifles, the butt of each rifle at the shoulder, the bayonet at the feet, so that, even when risen to no better than a sitting position, all were ready to receive a charge at the first note of alarm from the sentries posted in the centre of the circle.

Doubtless their night camps were spied on often, but their

positions found too difficult to invite an attack.

Nevertheless the pursuers were not to escape scot-free. Late one afternoon, shortly before the camping hour, when

STALKING MARATUNS

almost complete darkness shut them in and all were painfully plodding along, exhausted of their all-day hike, suddenly out of ambush and upon the head of the column sprang four Moros.

This ambush was even a louder and closer call for the life of Captain Tony Trigg than was his fight on the banks of the Dagao River to rescue Esa, for he was full twenty-five yards in front of his men when the attack was delivered.

Directly on him sprang two of the Moros.

One he dropped dead with a snap shot from his carbine, but, before he had time to reload it, the heavy campilan blade of the other Moro was actually descending upon his unprotected head.

Apparently nothing could save him—it was his finish—for he was out of sight of his men, who were sharply engaged in

the bush behind him, firing rapidly.

A second would have served to lift his carbine aloft and receive the blow on its barrel, or to jump aside, but no spare second was his.

Down upon him swept the campilan blade.

Nothing could save him.

But nothing?

Ha, good God! What is that? The fierce Moro suddenly falls limp into Tony's arms deluging him with blood, and something pricks him sharply in the ribs, while the campilan clatters into the bush behind him—and then the Moro's body slips to the ground and lies still!

By the time Tony had time to leap back to the aid of his men, the other two Moros were also dead, both pretty well

riddled with bullets.

And when this jack-out-of-the-box action was over and Tony came to examine the dead, it was to confront one of the big-

gest surprises and puzzles of his life.

The only wounds on the Moro who had been in the act of cutting Tony down with his campilan when he so mysteriously dropped dead into Tony's arms were made by two poisoned blow-gun darts that remained sticking in his back and the

transfixing of his heart by the long *chonta*-pointed Monobo arrow that had pricked Tony's ribs, and both of the Moros who had attacked his men had also been targets for Monobo weapons!

And yet no Monobo had been seen, nor did a quick beating

of the adjacent jungle win him a glimpse of one!

What in the name of all the world's biggest mysteries could

it mean?

Puzzle as he would, throughout that night and for days thereafter, Tony could find no explanation for the happening except that a band of Monobo warriors had been stalking their hereditary enemies and had just chanced to come in firing range of the Moros at the moment of their attack of his column.

This and no more could Tony make of the incident.

But, whatever the facts, it was very grateful, indeed, he was for their providential aid.

Just fancy it!

What coincidence could be more weird than the purely accidental saving of his life by his dearly-loved Esa's own tribesmen—who had doubtless been frightened to rapid flight by the heavy rifle fire!



CHAPTER LIII

RUTH'S JOURNEY HOME

It had been a hard day for Governor Morine as well as for Captain Tony Trigg, had been that of the departure of the latter's expedition for the hill country lying between Mt. Apo

and Davao Bay.

Other expeditions were being organized, and for him there had been no rest since dawn. Thus, as soon as Tony's launch had steamed away on the flooding tide, the Governor returned to his quarters bent on a hasty supper and an early turn

But scarcely was he comfortably settled at his supper when he heard bare feet bounding up the steps that led to the gallery of his quarters, and in rushed a wild-eyed native woman whom he recognized as one of Ruth Snell's domestics. Up close beside him she rushed and stood stock-still, her lips moving nervously but speechless.

"Well, well! What is it? Speak?" ordered the Governor. But still the woman stood trembling, staring, silent.

Springing up and seizing her shoulder and shaking her the Governor ordered:

"But speak woman! What is it?"

"The white woman—the mistress—I think—is dead. She

lays-"

But without waiting to hear more, the Governor sent his mess boy for the post surgeon and raced out of his own quar-

ters and across to Ruth's.

As he bounded up the steps, through the dusk he saw the slim white figure of Ruth naturally enough extended in one of the long lounge chairs, but with the head lopped over and resting on her right shoulder, in a suspiciously unnatural position.

Another leap and he was at her side—and as he sought to raise the drooping head, his heart stood still of the shock of

finding her drenched in blood, the beautiful head half severed by a down stroke of a bolo, that, delivered from the side by some stealthy assassin who had crept upon her through the darkness from the rear, had cut deeply into the collar bone.

No surgeon could do anything for Ruth.

Her death had been instantaneous.

For perhaps five minutes, indeed until the arrival of the surgeon, Governor Morine stood overwhelmed, his eyes filled with tears—tears for the sweet, pure, young life of this girl of rarely high ideals, extinguished in its early morning, and tears for the irreparable grief it must cause her lover, whom he himself had come to love as a brother.

In such moments, overwhelmed by calamity though one

may be, the thoughts race quickly.

Joe Morine found himself wondering whether, perchance, after all, Providence had not been working in a most fright-

fully cruel way but with kindly intent.

For Ruth Snell intellectually he held the highest esteem, so held and admired her more than any woman he had ever known, and for her he felt the warmest friendship; but surely God must know, as he himself well knew, that never could peace, or much less happiness or even content, result from the mating of two such diametrically remote opposites as Ruth and Tony—he, hot-blooded and almost as unbridled as ever was the lustiest berserker, she apparently as completely passionless as are the unsexed.

For, of course, not even to him had Tony confided the least hint of his disappointments, much less of his break with Ruth.

How would the madly-loving Tony ever manage to survive this affliction?

If this were really the working of a Providence that would finish as kindly as it had begun, then surely he would never set eyes on Tony again—some unmarked grave in the jungle must shortly hold his bones.

Surely, just that Tony himself would prefer, to confronting news of the loss by such terrible means of the woman he

idolized.

RUTH'S JOURNEY HOME

But presently he was roused by the coming of the surgeon. Lights were brought and the people of the household summoned—to reveal no more than Governor Morine had divined in the darkness, except that on the floor of the gallery beside her lay a bolo of a sort commonly used for domestic purposes and identified as one belonging to the house. Evidently, it had been found and appropriated by the assassin, the better to conceal his identity.

At the very first instant Governor Morine concentrated his mind upon the discovery and punishment of the assassin, his

suspicions settled fixedly upon Esa.

Of no other could he think as likely to so bitterly hate this sweet girl, whose life since she came to Cotabato had been devoted to the teaching of the native young and the succouring of the native sick, as to prompt such a ruthless butchery.

It must be Esa, and it was of her he first asked when he began a searching cross-examination of all the natives of the

household.

But one and all agreed, were positive, that Esa had not been in or near the house since, shortly after mid-day, she had left it to follow her mistress to school. Not one had seen her after that hour, and surely one or another must have seen her had she returned to the quarters or been around the vicinity.

Well, then, what had happened when the white woman re-

turned from school?

She returned quite as usual. After an early supper she had passed out to the gallery and had seated herself precisely where she was found, very shortly after sunset and night had fallen.

Had they heard or seen no one with her? Had they heard no voices or seen no one come to her or approaching or lurk-

ing about the house?

No. None had heard voices; none had approached her on the veranda, so far as any knew; but in the early dusk two had seen a Moro youth twice pass the house, and though they took him to be Tumog, the son of Dikaya, they could not surely say, for the light was already very dim. The last they

saw of him he had stopped near the corner of the gallery farthest from where Ruth sat, but since he was quietly standing with his back to the house nothing was thought of the incident.

Ha! Tumog, to be sure, was a possible assassin, with a positive motive. For was not he the very youth who drew his kris on Ruth when she ordered him out of the school for wearing his arms, the time Esa's vigilance and prompt action saved her?

Tumog! It certainly must be Tumog!

The Governor, it may be remembered was never slow. Thus it was that very few minutes elapsed before he had surrounded the house where Tumog lived with a detail of police, but only to find him absent. And when it took nearly an all-night house-to-house search to finally locate him in one of the outlying huts of the town and to there arrest him, naturally the Governor's suspicions were greatly strengthened.

Nor were the suspicions materially allayed when Tumog swore by the Prophet and by Balbal that he knew nothing whatever of the crime, and that it was a still hunt of a girl he was attached to that had taken him abroad from his home, notwithstanding there was not the least stain on his weapons

or person to connect him with the crime.

Tumog had a motive. Who else but Esa had? And she had

not been near the house.

Throughout the following day the Governor and his agents finetoothcombed the town for someone who could throw light on the murder, but with small result. Indeed, there was no result except that a servant of the quarters next adjoining Ruth's had also seen a Moro youth lurking near the corner of her gallery just at nightfall.

Esa none had seen since shortly after the dismissal of Ruth's

afternoon class.

And when the Governor's search of the town for evidence was ended without finding Esa or any trace of her, wise as are few men in the simple psychology of crude native minds, he jumped to the conclusion that Esa had followed Tony off,

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had managed to stow herself away on the launch during the bustle of embarking Tony's men and supplies.

That would be the wholly natural thing for her to do.

And if she had followed Tony, that certainly freed her of all suspicion, freed her completely.

Savage reasoning is very simple and direct.

The savage meets emergencies as they arise, deals with

them on impulse.

Had Tony been remaining in Cotabato, any day or hour his constant attentions to Ruth might rouse Esa's jealousy to a pitch to inspire her to do Ruth violence. Indeed, while he so remained Ruth would never for a moment be wholly safe from Esa.

But once he was ordered into the field, all Esa's anxieties about her rival would vanish and all her thoughts be concentrated on some scheme to follow and stay near him.

That would be the savage of it.

So Esa had surely figured—and so to a certainty she had managed to follow him, innocent and ignorant of Ruth's

death as was Tony himself.

And for the fact that she must be innocent, Joe Morine was very thankful; for not only did he feel grateful to the girl for averting further trouble with the Datu Linta and for saving Tony Trigg's life, but he had also come to have a certain respect for her rare intelligence, boldness and independence, so much that it would be for him a most unpleasant task to have to deal with her for some crime.

But ferret and delve tirelessly as he did, no positive proof fixing the crime on Tumog could the Governor find. Still, there was no shadow of a doubt in his mind that the Moro boy was guilty, and so he was kept heavily ironed in the guard house, on the chance that time might develop positive proof.

And when, a few days later, the transport by which poor Ruth Snell had planned to begin her journey home with Esa sailed away into the north, it carried the body of the martyr to James Snell's heartless greed.





CHAPTER LIV

ESA'S RETURN TO MT. APO

Ho! Ho! But couldn't she scream with delight, if she dared! But the Son of Fire and his marching column of little brown terriers must still be within earshot, and there might be a marauding band of the Maratuns prowling on the river.

At last she was once more afloat on her dearly-loved Malbul, stripped of the Moro turban and habit that had so well served to disguise her on the journey by launch to the junc-

tion of the Malbul and the Kabakan.

Now and hereafter she could count on the aid of *Dewata* for sure; now that she had understood His will and was so promptly responding to it, His red eye would guide her, His mighty hand protect her.

Surely, He must have called Munowog away and sent the good Limbings to bring her the little vinta she had found hidden in the cana brava, within a few yards of where Tony land-

ed his troops, for just thereabouts no people dwell.

Oh! the brave offering she would make to *Dewata* and the good *Limbings* as soon as she reached Pugsan! Nor will it be well for her to forget *Toomulkun*, who doubtless brought *De-*

wata's word to the Limbings.

Ah, but the terrible wrench it was to see the Son of Fire march away at the head of his men, to peer from her concealment in the reeds and strain her eyes for a last glimpse of the mighty figure of him who nearly crushed her when he took her in his arms.

But Dewata! His will must first be done—and then she would do hers—then the marches of the Son of Fire should not be so long or his sign so faint that Esa would not overtake and hover near him!

Never should the Son of Fire escape her!

At the best, her journey must be a long one. She must hasten. The distance she had drifted down stream in a day

when captive to the old slave-raider, the Saligan Ishmael, she could not hope to retrace against the current in less than

six days.

So furiously plied her paddle throughout the night, with no more than brief intervals of rest, ever keeping within slower waters near the bank and getting the advantage of all the remansos, the swift backwater always found where the bank

is deeply indented.

But no more was the dawn brightening the east than the cunning jungle girl worked her craft into concealment deep within a wide belt of cana brava. Alone and weaponless, it would be madness to travel by day, for any turn of a bend might expose her to some enemy. The Maratuns she knew were out, and, long lacking jungle news as she did, she had no notion of what inter-clan wars might not be on.

Her craft well hidden, a very few minutes sufficed to collect and stow away a hearty breakfast of jungle products; and then she quickly swarmed up lianas into the leafy seclusion of a lofty tree top, where, gently rocked by the cool breezes blowing down from Mt. Apo, she safely slept throughout the

day.

Evening come, down to the lower branches of her aerial bed chamber Esa softly slipped, there stopping long, listening and cautiously peering about until quite sure no folk were near—and then slid down a bejuco, swift as a ray of light, foraged her supper, worked the vinta out of its concealment and again bent hard to her paddle.

And so, wearily up stream she toiled, night by night. Hourly, swifter grew the current as she penetrated deeper into the bosom of the hills, and the slower was her progress. Muscles ached cruelly, but her brave will never weakened: she must

hasten, to become free to race to bim!

It was the dawn of the seventh morning since leaving the launch when Esa landed behind the bend next below Pugsan. Stealthily she crept forward, writhing through the vines and

undergrowth easily and noiselessly as a python.

Presently she could hear the splashings and shouts of her

ESA'S RETURN TO MT. APO

clanfolk, disporting themselves in the Malbul's cool pools. On and on she crept, nearer and nearer.

It was the height of the hot season, and so the clanfolk lin-

gered long in the river.

And when, finally, they came trooping back from the river, while passing near the great Council Chamber where it had been their wont to assemble to listen to the tales of their Lukus and the instruction of their Ingorandy, they got the fright of their lives.

What in Dewata's mighty name was that?

All stopped stock still, frozen stiff, of surprise and terror.

Yes, they could not be mistaken; out there in the Council Chamber rose and fell the low melodious notes of a kuteebapee, accompanying a sweet voice that softly intoned their favorite tale!

Ye Gods of Mt. Apo, but what else could it be but the spirit

of their Lukus, the great Usup!

His very spirit, it must be, for never in life was his voice so

sweet!

And since the spirits of the dead are no more welcome visitors among savage than among civilized folk, in another instant all were racing in mad terror into the jungle, led by the sturdy figure of their doughty young chief, Tugan, son of Punungan.

But just as he was plunging into the bush, a scream of laughter reached Tugan's ears, and a familiar voice cried:

"Stop, foolish Tugan! It's I, Esa, returned to you!"

And it was a very crestfallen Tugan who first halted and then made his way back very gingerly into the Council Chamber, until upon near approach he made sure it was really Esa in the very flesh.

Then, his face blazing with joy over the return of the idol

of his boyhood, upon her the young stalwart rushed.

But when he made to seize her in his arms, he got a heavy slap on the cheek that sent him reeling and made him realize that the slender idol of his youth had matured into a very powerful young woman.

Quickly round about them thronged the clanfolk, wild with delight to see her, treating her with familiarity, like the child

she was when she left them.

But after kindly greetings to right and left, Esa drew herself up and in the cold, hard tones Tugan had long ago learned to dread, tones like Punungan used to the warriors, she said:

"Back, my children, and listen. Usup and Lancona are

dead."

"Ah, the great Usup and the good Lancona have gone to join Punungan?" interrupted Tugan.

"Yes, Tugan; Dewata called them.

"And now it is your *Ingorandy* and *Lukus* who stands before you in the person of Esa! For by *Dewata*'s will, since her childhood, and up to the hour of his death, Usup was ever training Esa in the tribal lore and magic.

"And in Esa also behold your Medicine Woman, for Lancona made her wise as was she herself of the good and the

bad magic of all the plant life of the jungle.

"So remember, and mark her well; it is only through Esa you may invoke *Dewata's* mercy, only of Esa receive the tribal lore."

At the first note of Esa's cold tones, the chatter of the clanfolk ceased and faces fell grave of awe; Tugan's gravest of all.

But presently Tugan's face brightened and he said:

"And now it is come true, Tugan is glad. Don't you remember, little Esa, how Tugan divined it the day we fought the

python and the wild boar?"

"Yes, good Tugan," Esa quietly answered, "and it was her knowledge that one day this power must be hers that you used to think made Esa look right through you, like you were not there."

Whereupon Tugan and others standing near shivered and drew back. For here among them again once more stood a familiar of the mighty *Dewata!*

That was a busy day for Esa.

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She gave herself no rest—felt she dared not lose a moment's time.

She must get to bim, to the Son of Fire.

The afternoon she spent in the Council Chamber, first listening to such as sought her intercession with *Dewata*. And since so long all had been denied it, naturally few were

those who did not so appeal to her.

And this task finished, toward evening for an hour she held them spellbound with tales—of the slavery of Usup, Lancona and herself among the Moros, of the vileness of the Moro Datus and the Chino traders, of the marvellous magic of the 'Mergans.

At nightfall, tired as she was, aloft to her old nest in the tree tops Esa led Tugan. She must have an understanding with

him.

And it was a very meek and respectful Tugan who followed her, for his jaw was still sore of the blow with which she had received his first greeting.

But now Esa was gentle and kind, as of old, and in a mo-

ment had him all smiles when she said:

"I always knew my good Tugan would make a great chief. Tugan has done well. Already our clan is nearly twice as

strong as under Punungan."

"Tugan is glad Esa has returned to learn that Tugan has fought many battles, won much loot, killed many Moros. Tugan thought they had killed Esa, and he warred the Moros until they withdrew farther outside the hills than he dared follow."

"Tugan has indeed done well to so win peace and plenty for our people. But Tugan does not know that the 'Mergans have driven the terrible Maratuns and many other Moros up into the hills. They're ranging now all about us, perhaps near, certainly not very many days' travel distant."

"So! The Maratuns out! Then I must advance and double

my guards."

"By all means. But the 'Mergan warriors are now on the trail of the Maratuns, and it is of that I want to speak to Tu-

gan. Since the 'Mergans are pursuing our enemies, the Maratuns, to their death, the very same Maratuns who raided and ravished our village of Pugsan, Esa would lead a small band of our warriors to the 'Mergans' aid, for there may be rare chances to sink our poisoned blow-gun darts deep into the hated Moro flesh."

"Well thought, is that, little Esa; but it is Tugan's place to

lead our warriors."

Instantly the soft voice hardened and the great luminous almond eyes glittered fire as Esa answered:

"Perhaps Tugan did not understand Esa; she said she would

lead our warriors."

"Well, well," stammered poor Tugan; "it's just like it was before you went away. I just felt you'd one day have to be

Chief as well as Lukus and Ingorandy."

"By no means, good Tugan. Esa wants you, for the clan's chief—so long as you do her will. But mind you do that, lad; mind you do Esa's will! Against Esa's magic none can prevail! Esa holds all lives in the hollow of her hand!"

PoorTugan was hit so hard he shrank back and nearly pitched off their lofty perch, for perhaps more even than the mighty Dewata's wrath did he fear Esa when her tones grew cold.

"But it shall be just as you say, little Esa, in everything. Only—only—Tugan—he still wants you like he used to.

Won't Esa will to let Tugan have her to—to be his?"

Her voice was very gentle but her face and eyes stayed hard as flint, as Esa answered, "No, Tugan, you're never, never, to think of that again, much less speak of it to Esa. You are a good Tugan, and Esa likes you better than—better than—almost anyone. But Esa will do her own choosing—and mind you never question her on her choice!"

"It makes me hurt all over to hear that, little Esa, but al-

ways shall things be just as you say."

"Ah, good Tugan, that's what I expected of you; and we'll—I'll make this the strongest Monobo clan in all these forests. Esa may go from you, but she will come back—and always shall you be protected by her magic."

ESA'S RETURN TO MT. APO

It was evening of the fourth day after her arrival at Pugsan before Esa, acting in her capacity as *Ingorandy* had managed to finish her invocations of *Dewata's* mercy over the innumerable offerings tendered by her long-neglected tribesmen. But once this absolutely necessary task was concluded, the early dusk found Esa stealing swiftly through the jungle at the head of a little column of twenty of Pugsan's boldest warriors, all armed to the teeth with their blow-guns, spears,

and bows and arrows, in eager quest of the Son of Fire.





CHAPTER LV

HIS GUARDIAN ANGEL

In the morning Captain Tony Trigg and his company of little brown terriers would be back in Cotabato. Their three months' campaign through the hills lying between Mt. Apo and Davao Bay was ended. They had embarked that morning at the junction of the Malbul and the Kabakan Rivers, on a launch summoned by a message he had sent to head-quarters by vinta.

But it was an altogether horrid sight they would make when

they disembarked at Cotabato.

The launch had come none too soon, for many of the men were scarcely able to stand, near complete collapse of weakness. For three months they had been hiking through the jungles, strangers to rest, the last month living on roots and wild forest products, eked out with little monkey or wild pig meat, as it had been seldom Captain Trigg had ventured to disclose his presence by game shooting while on the trail of the Maratuns. The enemy must first be struck; then the survivors could feed and fatten.

All were tangled of beard and hair as the jungles they had been threading, nearly naked, wasted to nothing but skin

and bone.

A number of men were wholly naked, their cartridge belts encircling bare loins.

Mere walking skeletons of men were they all, ghastly, grin-

ning of face as ever are fleshless skulls.

However, there were no gaps in their ranks; they were all there, every last one of the little brown terriers that had started out, thanks to Captain Trigg's tireless vigils and clever bush strategy, and there were no wounded.

At least none of his original command was wounded, but one recruit who had joined him near the end of the campaign was so badly slashed in the side, of a kris cut, that it caused

the Captain keen anxiety—and with abundant good reason, for it was to the courage and adroitness of this recruit that he owed his life.

Warned by the launch whistle of their approach, the Gov-

ernor was at the landing to meet them.

Loud and cordial were the greetings, and as the terriers came feebly wobbling over the gang-plank, Morine sympathetically remarked, "Good God, Tony, it's a bunch of skeletons you all are, but it looks like you've not lost any of your little lot."

"Nary a one, Joe, and none wounded. Just good luck, of

course.'

"Good luck be d--d; it's thanks to your rare good bush training. But no wounded? What's that they're carrying ashore?" indicating a stretcher that four of the men were

carrying.

"That, Joe? Oh, that's—well, Joe, that's a recruit that joined us during my scrap with the Maratuns, and took some kris slashes that otherwise I should have had to myself assimilate," Tony rather awkwardly stammered.

"A recruit! What do you mean? That's a new game, re-

cruiting in the jungle, no?"

"Well, yes, I guess it is—and this one recruited itself, just naturally volunteered, see?"

"Oh! But who the devil is it?"

"Sorta thought you'd guess, Joe," Tony rather sheepishly

answered; "it's-why, Joe, it's Esa."

"The hell! Might have known it, if I'd had a lick of sense;" followed by a laugh Tony so little appreciated that he rather sharply warned:

"Might cut out that laugh, Joe. It's only twice that Esa has actually saved my life since I first hit the trail of the Maratuns. But for her, your old mate would be rotting out

there in the bush."

"Pardon a thousand times, Tony," the Governor seriously answered; "d--d heedless of me and I'm very sorry. That makes three times, then, counting the scrap you had at Gan-

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ta, when she nipped the Moro's heel. Don't wonder at your appreciation, my boy; she's about the most practical example of a Guardian Angel I ever heard of."

"Dead right you are, Joe; but excuse me, please, for I want

to see her safely stowed at the hospital."

"Right-o lad, and then hustle down to chow-and spin me

your yarn."

That comfortable and generous breakfast was a great luxury to Tony, but of it he ate very sparingly, too wise to overload a stomach weakened and shrunken of long fasting.

The meal over, the Governor eagerly urged, "And now for your yarn, my boy. Must have had one rotter of a time by

the condition you're all in."

"About the roughest I ever bucked into, Joe, and I'm sick of it—not of the hardship or fighting, mind, but of potting brave men that have no show against our arms. But we'll come to that later. First, I want to tell you about Esa.

"You see, it's this way. The day we sailed I saw nothing of her, but that night she smuggled herself aboard the launch so cleverly disguised that none recognized her, either aboard or after we disembarked. And once landed at the mouth of the Malbul, she stole a small vinta and slipped away up stream to join her people."

"Sure; sure as shooting; I was certain of it," the Governor answered, "only I fancied she'd stick tight to you, never leave

you."

"Ah, Joe, but she was too clever for that—or maybe feared I'd send her back. But I guess it was all just her wonderful strategy. You couldn't beat it in a thousand years, Joe. She figured, and dead right, too, that our biggest danger was from flank or night attacks. And what the devil did she do but return to her village, gather a bunch of her Monobo warriors and split criss-crossing through the bush until she finally cut my trail.

"Fact is, she got to us shortly after I first struck the sign of the Maratuns, but never once showed up. But day by day and night by night she and her wild warriors were stealing

through the jungle silently as leopards, screening my flanks

and advance, and prowling around us of nights.

"Three different nights, she says, the Maratuns tried to sneak us, but got such a peppering from her blow-guns that they bunked. And I guess that's right enough, for one day she saved me from an ambush—even dropped a dead Moro into my arms when I was sure his meat axe was about to chop my head off—and left me the worst puzzled guy you ever saw, for the only sign of our helpers was the arrows with which they decorated our enemies."

"But for the Lord's sake, do you mean to say that you saw none of the Monobos, Tony, through the days and weeks

they were haunting your trail?"

"Nary a single glimpse, Joe—not until the final scrap, and then none but Esa."

"Well, if that don't beat all the scouting I ever heard of."

"Ha, but the finish, Joe; listen to that. Why that was when she just naturally set a new record in the Guardian Angel business.

"We were about all in, scarcely another day's march left in us, when one evening, shortly after making our night camp, my sergeant called my attention to the dull glow of camp fires in the valley below us, and perhaps three hundred yards distant. The Maratuns must have thought they had thrown us off their scent, I suppose. Anyway, there they were at last, a gift in the last nick of time if I made no bad break stalking them.

"To the right I sent my sergeant and fifteen men to swing past them to the valley and slip up stream on them; my teniente led another detail straight at them, ordered to get as near as he could and lay low until the sergeant's column and mine were in position, while I led the rest of my men to the

left.

"Of course the teniente was the first to get into position, on a high bank commanding their camp and only fifteen yards from it.

"I had reached the valley and deployed my men in open

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HIS GUARDIAN ANGEL

order across it, and was sneaking slowly down stream, when suddenly from behind a tree I had laid my hand on to save myself from a slip, out sprang a Moro sentry, racing down toward their camp and shouting, "Mergans! Mergans!

"Instantly the teniente opened fire on the startled camp, followed shortly by fire from the sergeant's column, while I held my fire and awaited the rush I was sure would come as soon as they realized that escape down stream was cut off.

"God, but it was a scandal the way our dum-dummed Spitzer bullets cut up that brave lot, men, women and children alike, but help it we, of course, couldn't. Some charged straight into our flankers, some into the sergeant, but the bulk burst up stream, where my silence had led them to think they might escape.

"On they came, men, women and children, in a wild rush; but holding my fire until they were within ten yards of us, over they bowled like trees before a cyclone when we opened.

"A lot of it was pitiful. One woman carrying a baby and aided by her husband, was hit by a Spitzer that killed the baby, nearly tore one arm free of the shoulder and left very little flesh above the elbow, we later learned, but at that did not knock her down.

"At this, her husband furiously rushed at us, coming straight at me, as it chanced. By that time the magazine of my carbine was exhausted. But I was not worrying as I rapidly emptied my pistol into him, for I knew that my men were

also shelling him.

"That was about the most God-awful sight ever sprung on me, Joe. D--d if I didn't want to help him, would have spared that Moro if I could, for he was just splendid, charging on nothing but his nerve, for I knew I was not missing him and that at every jump he was chambering the Spitzers of my men.

"Yet on he came, like we were peppering him with pea shooters, until my pistol was empty, and I threw it at his head—

and missed!

"Just one more jump and he'd have me meat-axed!

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"And if you want to know, I was telling Tony Trigg adios when—what the devil do you think? Under my arm slipped a slim dark figure that leaped through the air at my Moro

like a panther—and down they went together!

"Well, as soon as I could shake the surprise of it and look the pair over, there lay Esa, badly gashed by his kris, and beside her lay the Moro, with the long chonta point of a Monobo spear driven clean through his heart!"

"By God, she's a girl in a million!" the Governor enthusi-

astically interrupted.

"Little off in your calculation, Joe," Tony quietly answered, "I'm figuring she's about one in ten millions. Jésus! but

where would you find her equal?"

"Well, I'm not taking the job of hunting one. If she isn't a finished article as a warrior's mate, then one was never foaled. And the Moro—I suppose he finally consented to quit."

"Not 'til he got Esa's spear-thrust, Joe, though there were

fourteen bullet holes in him!"



CHAPTER LVI

THE MARTYR TO THANKLESS WORK

When Captain Tony Trigg had finished his story of the death of the Maratun who had been stopped by Esa's spear-thrust, both Governor Morine and he for some time sat silent. But finally the Governor remarked:

"Of course, wounded as she was, you had to bring her back

here."

"Sure, Joe; wouldn't you?"

"Yes, certainly; I didn't mean you shouldn't. But what of

your Maratuns?"

"Oh, Lord, Joe, that little valley was just a shambles. Don't believe a half-dozen escaped. Left eighty odd of them there in the bush, food for the vultures and the pigs, for the boys finished the wounded with bolos or bayonets, as usual, all but three women whose wounds were not so bad it was not worth while to try to bring them in.

"And not one of my men got so much as a scratch. What do you think of that? Just couldn't get to us. Several had as close calls as I, but not one of the poor devils of Maratuns, the very best of all the Moro warriors, managed to score on

us.

"Fact is, it has sickened me of the game, so disgusted me you needn't be surprised if I throw up my commission. I'm just d-d if I believe I can stand any more of this butchery. Sure it's fighting, and fighting like hell, where a man has got to rattle his hocks to get to stay on earth, but so he knows the game these Moros just can't get to him. Better take to the bush than stick to this bloody game, I'm thinking."

"Take to the bush? What do you mean, Tony?"

"Oh-why take to any old game or place," Tony parried.

"Ah, yes; I see. Don't blame you, me. My resignation is in and I'm off for Manila myself shortly, for all my hopes of

peace and industry here are vanished. And what of this Mon-

obo girl when she comes out of the hospital, Tony?"

"Well, Joe, I may as well admit that's bothering me a lot. Guess it would be better all round if she'd stayed and gone to the States, as Ruth was planning she should. But maybe you didn't know that; maybe Ruth never told you."

"Why, no—no," the Governor hesitated.

"Sure; told me she'd decided to throw up her school and take Esa home to the States, meant to regularly adopt her, educate her, and all that. But now Ruth must be gone these two months or more, no? She said she was going on the next transport after I left. Did she?"

Governor Morine's face fell and he paled, but Tony did not

notice it, as he answered:

"Yes, my boy, Ruth Snell is gone—home—by the transport you say she had planned to take."

"And, of course, you've heard from her; she wrote from

Manila, no?"

"N-o, Tony, not a word from her have I received."

"What? That's strange, after you were such good pals." And then after a brief pause, Tony added, "You—you didn't split with Ruth, too, did you, Joe, like—like I did?"

"Break with her? No, thank God. But you-you broke

with her, Tony?"

"Yes, Joe, the night before I embarked for the field we both agreed we must always disagree. God, Joe, but I loved Ruth Snell—well, knowing me, perhaps you can realize how much—and maybe she cared as much for me as she could for anybody, but—well, I guess it was just a misfit in temperatures, and finally both of us became convinced of it.

"It's been the hardest wrench of my life to tear that girl out of my heart, Joe; had me bitterly struggling through many a lonely jungle march—but now, at last, I'm safe and sane again, ready to pack my carga and hump along life's trail, by

-well, I guess by myself."

The Governor rose nervously, strolled back and forth across the room several times in silence, and then approaching

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Captain Trigg and putting an arm affectionately around his shoulders and looking down into his eyes, whispered:

"I'm sorry, boy, but you've got to know it."

"What-what's up, Joe? Got to know what? You frighten me. Is she here? Has—has anything happened?"

"Ruth is gone home—gone to her long home, is Ruth Snell,

my dear Tony."

"Christ! You don't mean that?"

"Yes, my boy, Ruth Snell died a martyr to our thankless work out here, to the task of intervention to better these natives that is costing the States so heavily in blood and treasure."

"Dead, Joe? Ruth dead? But how? Of what, please?" Stammering, halting, in few words as possible, Joe told Tony the sadly gruesome facts—and then for some time these two strong men sat with bowed heads and covered eyes. Finally, Tony sprang to his feet and cried, "Tumog! Joe, where's Tumog? I'll go slash off his ears and make him eat

them—slit his d--d assassin's carcass into ribbons. Where is he?"

"Tumog is in the guard house—where you'll leave him alone, Tony. No use; I've gone my limit to find evidence to warrant dealing with him, but there's none to justify it."

Tony Trigg was a hard man to hold when his resentment was aroused, but he had his master in Joe Morine, whom no man long contraried once his glinting steel-blue eyes narrowed and the laughing mouth straightened to an ugly slit.

So, presently, Tony cooled down and quietly answered, "Suppose you're right, Joe; you about always are. And," grabbing Morine fiercely by the shoulders, "don't I know you'd have murdered him yourself if there'd been any sort of excuse for it!"

And then without further words, he left the house and sought his quarters.





CHAPTER LVII

BROODING OVER GRIM PICTURES

It was a fortnight later, the evening before Governor Morine was to sail for Manila, and Tony was come to his quarters for a farewell visit.

For Tony it had been a fortnight of physical rest that was

very grateful, but of the most acute mental trial.

He was sick of baiting and butchering Moros, but it would

be a terrible wrench to quit the service.

His mad man's love for Ruth Snell she herself had effaced, but there remained his love of all he had hoped she would one day mean to him, and it is perhaps our vanished ideals that we often mourn most.

Then there was his future—and Esa's—for strive as he would he could not dissociate his future from hers. That was just out of the question. She had been too much to him, in too many respects.

Esa couldn't say she loved him, for she knew no such word,

but great God, how royally she could live love!

Had saved his life three times, each time at deadly peril of

her own! Red blood! Hers was the reddest of the red.

What a contrast she with the types of metropolitan women who must ever be whetting their anæmic sensibilities at matinées and whose chance-taking is limited to a stake at bridge or to the outrage rather than a defense of their husband's honor—the apartment-hotel-dwelling sort, who, ceasing to discharge any of the useful functions of domestic economy, quickly descend to a class it is unnecessary to name, become parasitic burdens instead of helpmates.

And since even yet all men are battlers, in one way or another, at one game of life or another, who would not prefer a devoted, bold-hearted, battling helpmate to a trifling odalisque? Who, at least, of all who are not wholly ignorant of the worth of such high types? Only, of course, few indeed

there are rash enough to be willing to commit themselves to savagery to so advantage themselves. That Tony was not blind to, any more than to the fact that any so adventuring commit themselves to social ostracism.

But what the devil has society to give that promises and de-

livers half so much?

Thus it was a very preoccupied Captain Trigg who dropped into a chair alongside of Morine and so long remained silent that, presently, the latter laid a hand on his arm and sympathetically asked:

"Still up a tree, lad? Still puzzling over your plans? I've been hoping and rather expecting you'd decide to sail with

me."

"Hardly that, Joe; not just yet shall I sail. But I don't believe I can get my own consent to go out and slaughter any more Moros."

"Right-o, boy; I've felt sure of that. But have you heard of the Crater Fight in another of our Moro Provinces?"

"Why, no, Joe; what sort of an affair was it?"

"Oh, a proper wholesale massacre this time—of no less than sixteen hundred of them.

"It was this way, the lot had abandoned the rancherias and rice paddys and fled to the mountains on learning the troops were to be sent to compel them to pay taxes on their work beasts.

"The position they elected to occupy was the interior of an extinct crater, within which there was a spring of fresh water.

"The upper slopes of the approach to the crater's lip were so precipitous that only at one point was there access to it, after a long and nearly perpendicular climb through dense jungle. Hence they thought the position impregnable.

"Horse, foot and artillery were sent against them-infan-

try, cavalry, mountain guns and howitzers.

"The cavalry was left in the open at the foot of the mountain to pick up stragglers, and the rest of the men, after the most severe labor and some hard fighting, managed to win up

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to a position on the edge of the crater whence they could train their guns on the Moros.

"The slaughter began shortly after noon.

"The heat, of course, was terrific; and since the fire of our guns and riflemen soon cut them off from access to the spring, by late afternoon the Moros had become so desperate that up they came, charging en masse bound to die or to cut their way out of the trap they were in.

"As usual, of the Moros there were no survivors, while, also

as usual, our casualties were insignificant!"

"Good God, Joe, you mean it was a total wipe out of sixteen hundred men, women and children? That's the biggest individual lot yet bagged."

"Precisely—and is it not horrible? Of course, once the troops had attacked the Moros it became wholly impossible to spare them; you can't spare people who persist in fighting until

they are all dead.

"But, on the other hand, the fact that they are driven to such desperation is due exclusively to the policies pursued by our authorities, the policies that from month to month and from year to year will continue turning more and more of these Moros into outlaws, and getting them so slaughtered, until Congress and the home public learn the shameful facts and the voice of outraged humanity succours them, or until the last of the old fighting blood of this race is exterminated."

"You're putting it none too strong, Joe. It's God's truth you're telling. That's just the way I see it. If the local authorities are allowed to continue to rigidly censor all news of happenings in these provinces, and so manage to keep Congress and the home public ignorant of the shocking state of affairs here, this warfare is bound to go on indefinitely."

"Yes, and it further follows that the more timid and timeserving Datus who remain on their lands and have been appointed by the authorities as Tribal Ward Headmen, the local lovers of loot and women, are perpetuated in their an-

cient privileges and exercise more despotic control over their

people than before our coming."

For some time both sat silent, brooding over the grim pictures of the hunting of a race to its death which their conversation had conjured up.

Finally, Tony rose and, laying a hand affectionately on the

Governor's shoulder, said:

"Joe, you're doing right to leave, and I trust I'm myself not too hopelessly wrong in not leaving with you. I just can't go; not just now, anyway; but here's a communication," passing to Governor Morine a large envelope, "I ask you not to open until you are at sea, which will tell you as much of my plans as I myself now know."

And then, before Governor Morine had time to answer him,

Captain Tony Trigg whirled and left the house.

It was not until the vessel that bore him was standing in for the port of Zamboanga that Governor Morine opened the large envelope Captain Trigg had given him. The note was very brief and simple. It read:

"Dear Joe:

"Please deliver the enclosed at headquarters, as addressed. It contains my resignation from the Constabulary.

"Think of me sometimes, old mate; and, whatever you may hear, try not to think unkindly of

Your Old Pal,

TONY TRIGG."

For some time Morine sat gravely nodding his head, and then murmured to himself: "He'll never leave that Monobo girl—and I'm not a d--d bit sure I can find it in my heart to blame him."



CHAPTER LVIII

ADRIFT IN THE MISTS

No argosy bearing a man and a maid out into the golden morning of love ever carried a lighter cargo.

Besides his own weapons and her tiny kuteebapee, the vinta

held naught but the pair of them.

And they themselves held naught but their mad love for each other.

The swift flooding tide was bearing them rapidly inland,

straight toward Mt. Apo.

The paddles lay idle in the bottom of their craft; that was

no time for work—with paddles.

Costumed in the height of Monobo fashion, that is to say wearing practically no costume at all, the nymph the sun's rays always turned to burnished gold lay in Tony's arms.

He wore a look of satisfaction; she wore a smile.

The sweet-scented night breeze intermingled its sensuous kisses with theirs; the mists caressed them; the river sang to them; as one hammered their two hearts.

Their past they have shed, as does a buck its antlers.

Their future—ah, leave that to the Rio Grande's golden flood; let it bear them where it would.

Esa had him she wanted; Tony had the girl he loved.

Basta! Enough.

Dawn was near. Soon *Dewata's* great eye would be glowing, scattering the mists that had so well served to isolate the drifting lovers. Soon concealment must be sought ashore.

Esa reclined sleeping.

Tony lay dreaming, his head so sweetly pillowed that it was gently rising and sinking as on that never-to-be-forgotten day when it first lay on Esa's moist breast. Dreaming he lay, dreaming of the happiness realized and the happiness yet to be, communing with himself.

But presently a hateful vision came to him, a horrid vision

that easily might have terrorized a heart less bold than his.

But to it he lazily murmured:

"Ho! Ho! You here? Well, upon my word as first punishment to the wicked, you're a wonder. Can't even let a fellow get well started, can you, Mr. Devil? Didn't know there was aerogram service between Mindanao and Hades. Nor, lacking any confidants, can I figure out who piped me off to you. And my compliments—please accept them; as a trailer, your stunt of picking us up out here in the mists entitles you to receive first prize.

"Ha! So? You're figuring you've got me? Sinned? Sure I've sinned—and like it, if you want to know, like it so well your torrid bluffs don't go, see? So you just run along and toast your cloven hoofs on your own furnace doors, for they'll soon

get frostbitten up here—unless you stay close to us.

"What? What's that? You be doubly damned for the infernal liar you are. This girl has killed a lot, is a murderess? It's false as your diggings are foul. Of course she has killed, but never once save in self-defence or while battling to protect the life of one she loved. That I'll swear by God. She's a queen, is this girl, fit mate for the boldest-hearted warrior king of all history. You curse—"

But just then the rapid thinning of the mists warned Tony to spring to his feet and seize and swiftly wield a paddle—whose vigorous strokes served to drive the *vinta* deep among sheltering reeds, and to escape from his hateful visitor.



CHAPTER LIX

THE REVELATIONS OF A FEVER

Tugan did not bother them.

Any resentment he may have felt over the return of Esa mated with the Son of Fire he never in any way showed. He did not dare. Esa had frightened him too badly for that, before she led her twenty warriors on the march to intercept the 'Mergans.

Indeed, peace reigned without as well as within the village of Pugsan. Their ancient enemies, the Moros, were so continually harried by the 'Mergans that their raids of the Monobo clans for plunder and slaves had for some time ceased.

And ye gods of Mt. Apo, how happy was Esa! She had come into her own, realized the last of her dreams. The clan both revered and feared their *Ingorandy* and loved their sweet-voiced *Lukus*—and were correspondingly generous in their tribute. And she was gentler with them even than had been Usup, so long as they obeyed her.

Indeed, it was hard for her to so much as frown upon a malcontent, for she was just drunk with the joy of her mating

with the Son of Fire.

Nor was the Son of Fire one whit less content and happy than was she.

He had dreamed it, but never had he ventured hope of realizing it.

What had he done to deserve so much?

Here he was in full enjoyment of the broadest FREEDOM the world holds—free of the galling shackles of Law and Convention, free of the jealousies and hatreds they combine to engender, free of the greed and strife they foster, emancipated from all life's cares!

Here, mated with the most adorable girl in the world, he was downily nested in one of the sweetest nooks of Nature, where all voices are low and melodious as the trills of Esa's

kuteebapee and the whisperings of the leaves, and all character and life as clean as the Malbul's limpid waters—here among idyllic folk where no tongue lies and no hand steals!

To Hades with Civilization, with its deceits and its hypocrisies, its slavery to blood or money castes, its remorseless plotters and looters, its spineless men and its denatured women!

Here about him were no women who love baubles, dogs and

picture hats more than they love maternity!

Sin? To be sure he was sinning against all conventions, from their point of view, from the home point of view. But who was actually sinning most in day to day life, they in their artificial environment or he here among these simple, clean-living tree-top folk?

But care? Freedom? How poor Tony Trigg was deceiving

himself!

Never may one be long free of care, and never has freed slave lived so long that he has not remained shackled to the traditions of his bondage.

The chains of convention into which he had been born he had cast off, but its traditions remained. And they were to

exact their scot for his infidelity to them.

One night, very few nights after their arrival in Pugsan, Esa complained of a violent headache. Shortly thereafter a high fever developed.

Under her instructions, the Son of Fire prepared and gave her to drink of a potion she was sure would quickly relieve

her.

But for once the medicine woman was at fault.

All night long her pain-racked, burning body tossed of the fever's torture, probably because it was one of the stubborn types common to the coastal plain with which her preceptress, Lancona, had never learned to contend.

And all night long the Son of Fire hovered helpless beside

her, more terribly tortured than was she.

Was he soon to lose her? Well, by God, he wouldn't!

If Esa needs must go, so would he!

THE REVELATIONS OF A FEVER

Toward dawn delirium ensued.

Esa's fevered brain began to wander and she to talk—of the wild incidents of the jungle's duskiest labyrinths, of chases of game, questing for herbs with Lancona; of her fight for escape from the amorous old Wa-Tu, of the death of the Datu Linta and her rescue by the Son of Fire.

Ah, but what was that? Now she was speaking of the white

woman, of Ruth!

At first her words came in such a hot burst of passion that they were unintelligible. All he caught was:

"Go with—'Mergans' country—leave him—crazy—never!" Then, after a wild laugh, the soft voice distinctly hissed:

"Such a fool, that white woman, to think her magic greater than Esa's! Ho, ho! She didn't know that Esa holds all lives in the hollow of her hand! And she thought she could take Esa away from the Son of Fire? Poor fool! She didn't know that Esa would kill, kill, kill to prevent that! Of course, if she were to go on a smoking boat, Esa must follow, for that she had promised the Son of Fire. But if the white woman couldn't go, then Esa was free—free, free, FREE to go to bim!

"And it was all so easy; just that one little flick of the bolo,

and then Esa was free!"

Tony Trigg could hear no more. Springing to his feet, he rushed out of the hut and into the jungle, care hard upon his heels, happiness fled.

It was late the second day thereafter when he returned, to find Esa up and about but still very feeble, and nearly crazed

by his absence.

Nor, of course, could she understand him when he roughly repulsed her caresses.

"But, Son of Fire, what is it?" she anxiously asked; "your eye is as terrible as *Dewata's* when he is at his angriest."

"Tell me, girl, the truth—but of course I know you cannot lie. While your head was sick, you said things that make me think it was you who killed the white woman. Did you?"

"Why, yes, Son of Fire; I never dreamed you would not

know it was Esa," and she smiled up at him with the inno-

cent pride of a child who has done well.

For an instant he stood trembling of the realization that it was he, he himself who was responsible for the death of the pure woman he had once so dearly loved, and of rage at her savage murderess—and then he snatched his bolo and lifted it to deal penalty.

But all in the same instant the big, soft, almond eyes were looking anxiously up into his, and the sweet voice inquiring:

"Pobrecito! Poor little one, but you are sick, are you not? If not, I don't understand. I killed to stay with the Son of Fire."

The bolo clattered to the floor, as he murmured to himself: "No! no! no! I could never strike her; I'm to blame and I must pay!"

And then as he gently but firmly pushed her from him, he

added aloud:

"That's just the trouble, Esa; you do not understand, and you never can—while I, my God, I must always understand, may never forget."

For some time the strong man stood trembling, his face

deeply lined with agony.

Finally he murmured to himself, "That's it. I owe no less—to Ruth. I must pay!" And then, dropping his eyes to Esa's, he hoarsely whispered:

"Esa, I leave tomorrow, never to return."

"And—and Esa?" the soft voice anxiously queried.

"Esa will stay with her people."

"The Son of Fire is Esa's god; his will is hers."

The suffering face softened and he answered very gently: "I'm so very sorry, gordita, but it must be so," and then he turned and left the hut.



CHAPTER LX

LANCONA'S MAGIC

They were alone in the hut. Their supper was just finished, a frugal meal made up of vegetables boiled in sections of green bamboo tube and boar meat roasted over embers.

It was their last evening together.

At dawn he was to begin his journey down the Malbul to the sea.

Neither had spoken since the morning.

But never through the meal had Esa's eyes left his face. No tear moistened them, but they were so full of the unspeakable agony of one taking a last look at her best loved dead that seldom did he dare let his glance meet hers.

So for some moments they remained seated, still silent, but only for a few moments.

Presently a startled look swept across his face, quickly followed by an expression of agonized dread.

Slowly, with difficulty, like one suddenly stricken with the palsy of great age, he rose to his feet, swaying like a tottering forest monarch honeycombed by the *brocas*.

Up to her feet also struggled Esa, staggering, scarcely able to stand.

Toward her he feebly stretched his arms and stammered:

"But what—what is it? My—my eyes—they are dim—my strength—is gone—my tongue—"

"Lan—Lancona's magic! Esa put it in—in—the—food. Esa cou—could not let the—Son of Fire go—go—alone!"

And then, gathering the last of her failing strength, on him she sprang, clasping her arms about his neck and pressing her lips to his, as on that fateful night in the old stone fort on Tantuan Hill.

Close he clasped and tenderly he fondled her.

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They swayed and tottered.
But just before they toppled to the floor, and there lay still, he whispered:
"Esa has—has done well—ve—very well!"

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